THE

BARREN FIG TREE:

OR, THE

DOOM AND DOWNFALL

OF THE

FRUITLESS PROFESSOR:

SHEWING,

That the Day of Grace may be paſt with him long before his Life is ended.

The Signs alſo by which ſuch miſerable Mortals may be known.

By JOHN BUNYAN. K

MATTH. iii. 10.

And now alſo the Ax is laid unto the Root of the Trees: therefore every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and caſt into the Fire.

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TO THE

READER.

Courteous Reader,

I *Have written to thee now about the* Barren Fig Tree, *or how it will fare with the* Fruitless Professor, *that standeth in the* Vineyard *of God*

Of what Complexion thou art, I cannot certainly divine, but the

Parable *tells thee, that the* Cumber-ground *must be cut down.*

A Cumber-ground *Professor is not only a Provocation to* God, *a Stumbling-block to the* World, *and a Blemish to* Religion, *but a Snare to his own Soul also. Though his* Excellency *mount up to the Heavens, and his* Head *reach unto the* Clouds, *yet he shall perish for ever, like his own Dung, they that have seen him, shall say,* Where is he? (*a*)

Now they count it Pleasure to riot in the Day-time, but what will they do when the Ax *is fetched out.* (*b*)

The Tree whose Fruit withereth, is reckoned a Tree without Fruit, a Tree twice *dead* (*c*) *one that must be plucked up by the Roots.*

O

(*a*) Job xx. 6. (*b*) 2 Pet. ii. 13, 14. (*c*) Jude 12.

To the READER.

O thou Cumber-ground, *God expects Fruit, God will come seeking Fruit shortly.*

My Exhortation therefore is to Professors, that they look to it, that they take heed.

The Barren Fig Tree *in the* Vineyard, *and the* Bramble *in the* Wood, *are both prepared for the* Fire.

Profession is not a Covert *to hide from the Eye of God, nor will it palliate the revengeful threatning of his Justice, he will command to cut it down shortly.*

The Church *and a* Profession, *are the best Places for the* Upright; *but the worst in the World for the* Cumber-ground: *He must be cast, as profane, out of the* Mount of God: *Cast, I say, over*

the Wall of the Vineyard, *there to wither; thence to be, gathered and burned.* It had been better for them that they had not known the Way of Righteousness: (*d*) *And yet if they had not, they had been damned; but it is better to go to Hell without, than in, or from under a Profession:* These shall receive greater Damnation. (*e*)

If thou be a Professor, *read and tremble: If thou be* Profane, *do so likewise.* For if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and Sinners appear? Cumber-ground, *take heed of the* Ax: Barren Fig Tree, *beware of the Fire.*

But I will keep thee no longer out of the Book: Christ Jesus, *the Dresser of the* Vineyard, *take care of thee, dig about thee and dung thee, that*

(*d*) Ezek. xxviii, 16, John xv, 16, 2 Pet, ii, 12.
(*e*) Luke xx, 47.

that thou mayeſt bear Fruit: *That when the Lord of the* Vineyard *cometh with his* Ax *to ſeek for* Fruit, *or pronounce the Sentence of Damnation, on the* Barren Fig Tree, *thou mayeſt eſcape that Judgment. The* Cumber-ground *muſt to the* Wood-pile, *and thence to the Fire.*

FAREWELL.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jeſus in Sincerity. *Amen.*

J. BUNYAN.

7 NO 61

THE BARREN FIG-TREE, OR, THE DOOM AND DOWNFALL OF THE FRUITLESS PROFESSOR.

Luke xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9.

A certain Man had a Fig Tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and sought Fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he to the Dresser of his Vineyard, Behold, these three Years I come seeking Fruit on this Fig Tree, and find none: Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground. And he answering, said, Lord, let it alone this Year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear Fruit well: And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

AT the Beginning of this Chapter, we read, how some of the *Jews* came to *Jesus Christ*, to tell him of the Cruelty of *Pontius Pilate*, in mingling

ling the Blood of the *Galileans* with their Sacrifices. An Heathenish and prodigious Act. For therein he shewed not only his Malice against the *Jewish* Nation, but also against their Worship, and, consequently, their God. An Action, I say, not only Heathenish, but prodigious also; for the Lord *Jesus paraphrasing* upon this Fact of his, teacheth the *Jews*, that without Repentance, *they should all* likewise *perish*. *Likewise*, that is, by the Hand and Rage of the *Roman* Empire: Neither should they be more able to avoid the Stroke, than were those *Eighteen upon whom the Tower of* Siloam *fell, and slew them* (*a*): The Fulfilling of which *Prophecy*, for their Hardness of Heart, and Impenitency, was in the Days of *Titus*, Son of *Vespasian*, about *forty* Years after the Death of Christ. Then, I say, were these *Jews*, and their City both, environed round on every Side, wherein both they and it, to Amazement, were miserably overthrown. God gave them Sword, and Famine, Pestilence, and Blood, for their Outrage against the

(*a*) Luke xix. 42, 43, 44.

the Son of his Love: So *Wrath came on them to the uttermost* (*b*).

Now to prevent their old and foolish *Salvo*, which they always had in Readiness against such *Prophecies* and Denunciations of Judgment, the Lord *Jesus* presents them with this *Parable*, in which he *emphatically* shews them, that their Cry of being the *Temple of the Lord*, and of their being the Children of *Abraham*, &c. And their being the Church of God, would not stand them in any stead. As who should say, It may be you think to help yourselves against this my *Prophecy*, of your utter and unavoidable Overthrow, by the Interest which you have in your outward Privileges: *But all these will fail you*; for what think you, *A certain Man had a* Fig Tree *planted in his Vineyard, and he came and sought Fruit thereon, and found none.* This is your Case. The *Jewish* Land is God's Vineyard, I know it; and I know also, that *you are the Fig Trees.* But behold there wanteth the main Thing, *Fruit*, for the Sake and Expectation of which he

(*b*) 1 Thess. ii. 16.

he set this Vineyard with Trees. Now, seeing the *Fruit* is not found amongst you; the Fruit, I say, for the Sake of which he at first did plant this Vineyard; what remains, but that in Justice he command to cut you down, *as those that cumber the Ground*, that he may plant himself another Vineyard, *Then said he to the Dresser of his Vineyard, Behold, these* three *Years I come seeking Fruit on this Fig Tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbreth it the Ground?* This therefore must be your End, altho' you are planted in the Garden of God, for the Barrenness and Unfruitfulness of your Hearts and Lives, you must be cut off, yea, rooted up, and cast out of the Vineyard.

In *Parables* there are *two Things* to be taken Notice of, and to be enquired into of them that read,

I. *First*, The *Metaphors* made use of.

II. *Secondly*, The Doctrine, or *Mysteries* couched under such *Metaphors*.

The

The *Metaphors* in this *Parable* are:

(1.) A certain Man.
(2.) A Vineyard.
(3.) A Fig Tree, barren or fruitless.
(4.) A Dresser.
(5.) Three Years.
(6.) Digging and Dunging, *&c.*

The *Doctrine*, or Mystery, couched under these Words, is to shew us, *What is like to become of a fruitless*, or *formal Professor*; for

1. By the *Man* in the *Parable*, is meant *God* (*c*) *the Father*.
2. By the *Vineyard*, his (*d*) Church.
3. By the *Fig Tree*, a *Professor*.
4. By the Dresser, *The Lord Jesus*.
5. By the *Fig Tree's* Barrenness, *The Professor's Fruitlessness*.
6. By the *three* Years, *the Patience of God, that for a Time he extendeth to barren Professors*.
7. This Calling to the Dresser of the Vineyard *to cut it down*, is to

 shew,

(*c*) Luke xv. 11. (*d*) Isaiah v. 7.

ſhew, *the Outcries of Juſtice againſt fruitleſs Profeſſors* (*e*).

8. The *Dreſſer*'s interceding, is to ſhew, *how the Lord Jeſus ſteps in, and takes hold of the Head of his Father's Ax*, to ſtop, or at leaſt to defer preſent Execution againſt a *barren Fig Tree.*

9. The *Dreſſer*'s Deſire to try to make the *Fig Tree* fruitful, is to ſhew you, *How unwilling he is that ever a barren Fig Tree ſhould yet be barren, and periſh.*

10. His digging about it, and dunging of it, is to ſhew *his Willingneſs to apply Goſpel Helps to this barren Profeſſor*, if happily he may be fruitful.

11. The Suppoſition (*f*) that the *Fig Tree* may yet continue fruitleſs, is to ſhew, that when Chriſt Jeſus hath done all, *there are ſome Profeſſors will abide barren and fruitleſs.*

12. The Determination upon this Suppoſition, at laſt to cut it down, *is a certain Prediction of ſuch Profeſſors unavoidable and eternal Damnation.*

But to take this *Parable* into Pieces, and to diſcourſe more particularly, though

(*e*) Iſa. liii. 12. (*f*) Matt. iii. 10.

though with all *Brevity*, upon all the Parts thereof.

A certain Man had a Fig Tree planted in his Vineyard.

The Man, I told you, is to present us with God the Father, by which *Similitude* he is often set out in the *New Testament*.

Observe then, that it is no new Thing, if you find in God's Church, *barren Fig Trees*, fruitless Professors; even as here you see is a Tree, a fruitless Tree, a fruitless Fig Tree in the Vineyard. Fruit is not *so easily* brought forth, as a Profession is *got into*; it is easy for a Man to cloath himself with a fair Show in the Flesh, to word it, and say, Be thou warmed and filled with the best. It is no hard Thing to do these with other Things; but to be *fruitful*, to bring forth *Fruit to God*; this doth not *every* Tree: No, not every Fig Tree that stands in the Vineyard of God. Those Words also (g) *(Every Branch in me that beareth not Fruit, he taketh away,)*

 assert

(g) John xv. 2.

assert the same Thing. There are Branches in Christ, in Christ's Body mystical, (which is his Church, his Vineyard) that beareth not Fruit, wherefore the Hand of God is to take them away. *I looked for Grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes,* (*h*) that is, no Fruit at all that was acceptable with God. Again, *Israel is an empty Vine, he bringeth forth Fruit unto himself,* (*i*) none to God; he is without Fruit to God. All these, with many more, shew us the Truth of the Observation, and that God's Church may be cumbered with fruitless Fig Trees, with barren Professors.

Had a (Fig Tree.)

Although there be in God's Church that be barren and fruitless; yet, as I said, *to see to in Appearance,* they are like the rest of the Trees, even a Fig Tree: It was not an Oak, nor a Willow, nor a Thorn, nor a Bramble, but a Fig Tree. (*k*) *They came before thee*

(*h*) Isaiah v. 4. (*i*) Hos. x. 1. (*k*) Ezek. xxxiii. 30, 31.

thee as the People cometh; they delight to know my Ways, as a Nation that did Righteousness, and forsook not the Ordinances of their God; they ask of me the Ordinances of Justice, they take delight in approaching to God (*l*): And yet be but barren, fruitless, and unprofitable Professors. *Judas* also was one of the Twelve, a *Disciple*, an *Apostle*, a *Preacher*, an *Officer*, yea, and such an one also, as none of the Eleven mistrusted, but preferred before themselves, each one crying out, *Is it I? Is it I* (*m*)? None of them, as we read of, mistrusting *Judas*, yet he, in Christ's Eyes, was the Barren Fig Tree, a Devil, (*n*) a fruitless Professor. The foolish Virgins went forth of the World with the other; had Lamps, and Light, and were awakened with the other; yea had Boldness to go forth when the Midnight Cry was made with the other; and thought that they could have looked Christ in the Face, when he sat upon the Throne of Judgment, with the other; and yet but foolish, but barren Fig

(*l*) Isaiah lviii. 1, 2, 3, 4. (*m*) Mark xiv. 19. (*n*) John vi. 70.

Trees, but fruitless Professors (*o*): *Many*, saith Christ, *will say unto me in that Day, this and that* (*p*), and will also talk of many wonderful Works; yet, behold, he finds nothing in them, but the *Fruits* of Unrighteousness: They were altogether barren and fruitless Professors.

Had a Fig Tree (planted).

This Word *(planted)* doth also reach far: It supposeth one taken out of its natural Soil, or removed from the Place it grew in once; one that seemed to be called, awakened; and not only so, but by strong hand carried *from the World*, to the Church; *from Nature*, to Grace; *from Sin*, to Godliness. *Thou broughtest a Vine out of Egypt, thou didst cast out the Heathen and plant it* (*q*). Of some of the Branches of this Vine, were there unfruitful Professors.

It must be concluded therefore, that this Professor (that remaineth notwithstanding fruitless) is, as to the

(*o*) Matth. vii. 22, 23. (*p*) Luke xiii. 26, 27. (*q*) Psal. lxxx. 8.

the View and Judgment of the Church, rightly brought in thither; to wit, by Confeſſion of Faith, of Sin, *and a Shew of Repentance* and Regeneration, (thus falſe Brethren creep in unawares.) All theſe Things this Word *Planted*, intimateth; yea, farther, that the Church is ſatisfied with them, conſents they ſhould abide in the Garden, and counteth them ſound as the reſt. But before God, in the Sight of God, they are graceleſs Profeſſors, barren and fruitleſs Fig Trees.

Therefore it is one Thing to be *IN the Church*, or in a Profeſſion; and another to be *OF the Church* (*r*), and to belong to that Kingdom, that is prepared for the Saint, that is ſo indeed. Otherwiſe, *being planted ſhall it proſper, ſhall it not utterly wither, when the Eaſt Wind toucheth it? It ſhall wither in the Furrows where it grew.*

Had a Fig Tree planted in (his) *Vineyard.*

In

(*r*) Ezek. xviii. 10.

In *(his)* Vineyard Hypocrites, with rotten Hearts, are not afraid to come before God in *Sion.* These Words therefore suggest unto us, a prodigious kind of Boldness and hardened Fearlessness: For what Presumption higher, and what Attempt more desperate, than for a Man that wanteth Grace, and the true Knowledge of God, to croud himself (in that Condition) into the House, or Church of God; or to make Profession of, and desire the Name of God should be called upon him?

For the Man that maketh a Profession of the Religion of Jesus Christ, that Man hath, as it were, *put the Name of God upon himself* (*s*), and is called and reckoned now, (how fruitless soever before God, or Men) the Man that hath to do with God, the Man that God owneth, and will stand for. This Man, I say, by his Profession, suggesteth this to all that know him, to be such a Professor.—Men merely natural, I mean, Men that have not got the *devilish* Art of Hypocrisy, are afraid to think of doing

(*s*) Daniel ix. 19. chap. xxxvi. 20, 21, 22. and ii. 39.

ing thus. *And of the rest durst no Man join himself to them, but the People magnified them* (*t*). And indeed it displeaseth God, *They have brought*, saith he, *Men uncircumcised into my Sanctuary* (*u*). And again, *When you come to appear before me, who had required this at your Hands to tread my Courts, saith God* (*x*). They have therefore learnt this Boldness of none in the visible World, they have only took it of the Devil (*y*); for he, and he only (with these his Disciples) attempt to present themselves in the Church before God. *The Tares are the Children of the wicked One* (*z*); the *Tares*, that is, the Hypocrites that are Satan's Brood, the Generation of Vipers, that cannot escape the Damnation of Hell.

(Had) *a Fig Tree planted in his Vineyard.*

He doth not say, *He planted a Fig Tree*, but there *was a Fig Tree there*; he *had*, or *found*, a Fig Tree planted in his Vineyard.

The

(*t*) Acts v. 13. (*u*) Isa. i. 12. (*x*) Job i. 6. and ii. 1. (*y*) Matth. xiii. 25—38. (*z*) Matth. xxiii. 33.

The Great God will *not* acknowledge the *barren Fig Tree*, or barren Professor, to be *his* Workmanship; or a Tree of *his* bringing in; only the *Text* saith, he *had* one there. This is much like that in *Matthew, Every Plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up* (*a*). Here again are Plants in his Vineyard, which God will not acknowledge to be of his planting: And he seems to suggest, that in his Vineyard there are many such.—*Every Plant*, or all those Plants, or Professors that are got into the Assembly of the Saints, or into the Profession of their Religion, without God and his Grace, *shall be rooted up*.

And when the King came in to see the Guests, he saw a Man that had not on a Wedding-garment, and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-garment (*b*)? Here is one so cunning and crafty, that he beguiled all the Guests; he got and kept in the Church, even until *the King himself came in to see the Guests*; but his Subtilty got him nothing. It did not blind the Eyes of the King; it did not *pervert*

(*a*) Matth. xv. 13. (*b*) Matth. xxii. 11, 12.

pervert the Judgment of the Righteous. Friend, how cameſt thou in hither? did overtake him at laſt; even a publick Rejection: The King diſcovered him in the Face of all there preſent. *How cameſt thou in hither?* My Father did not bring thee hither, I did not bring thee hither, My Spirit did not bring thee hither, thou art not of the Heavenly Father's planting, *How cameſt thou in hither?*

He that cometh not in at the Door, but climbeth up ſome other Way, the ſame is a Thief and a Robber (*c*). This *Text* alſo is full, and plain to our Purpoſe; for *this* Man *came not* in by the *Door*, yet got into the *Church*, he got in by climbing; he broke in at the Windows, he got ſomething of the Light and Glory of the Goſpel of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* in his Head; and ſo (hardy Wretch that he was) he preſumed to croud himſelf among the Children. But how is this reſented? What ſaith the King of him? Why this is his Sign, *The ſame is a Thief and a Robber.* See ye here alſo, if all they be owned as the Planting

(*c*) John x. 1.

Planting of God, that get into his Church, or Profession of his Name.

Had a Fig Tree. Had one without a Wedding-garment, had a Thief in his Garden, at his Wedding, in his House. These climbed up some other Way. There are *many* Ways to get into the Church of God, and Profession of his Name, besides, and without an entering by the Door.

1. There is the Way of *Lying* and *Dissembling*, and at *this Gap* the *Gibeonites* (*d*) got in. 2. There is sometimes *Falseness* amongst *some* Pastors, either for the Sake of carnal Relations or the like; at *this Hole Tobiah* (*e*) the Enemy of God got in. 3. There is sometimes *Negligence*, and too much Uncircumspectness in the whole Church, thus (*f*) the Uncircumcised got in. 4. Sometimes again, let the Church be *never so circumspect*, yet *these* have so much Help from the Devil, that *they* beguile them all, *and so get in.* These are of that Sort of Thieves that *Paul* complains of; *False Brethren brought in unawares* (*g*). *Jude* also cries out of these,

(*d*) Joshua ix. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. (*e*) Neh. xiii. 4, 5, 6. (*f*) Ezek. xliv. 7—9. (*g*) Gal. ii. 3, 4.

these, *certain Men crept in unawares* (g). *Crept in*, What! were they so lowly! A voluntary Humility, a neglecting of the (*h*) Body, not in any honour. Oh, how seemingly Self-denying are some of these creeping Things, that yet are to be held, (as we shall know them) an Abomination to *Israel* (*i.*)

But in a great House, there are not only Vessels of Gold and of Silver, but also of Wood, and of Earth, and some to Honour, and some to Dishonour (*k*). By these Words the Apostle seems to take it for granted, that as there *hath* been, so there still *will* be, these Kind of Fig Trees, *these* barren Professors in the House, when all Men have done what they can; *Even as in a great House, there are always Vessels to Dishonour*, as well as those to Honour and Glory; Vessels of *Wood* and of *Earth*, as well as of *Silver* and *Gold:* So then there must be *wooden* Professors in the Garden of God; there must be *earthy*, *earthen* Professors in his Vineyard; but that methinks is the biting Word, *and*

(*g*) Jude 4. (*h*) Col. ii. 22, 23. (*i*) Lev. xi. 43, 44. (*k*) 2 Tim. ii. 20.

ſome to Diſhonour. That to the *Romans* (*l*) is dreadful, but *this* ſeems to go beyond it. *That* ſpeaks but of the Reprobate in general, but *this* of ſuch in particular. *That* ſpeaks of their hardening but in the common Way; but *this*, that they muſt be ſuffered to *creep* into the Church, *there to* fit themſelves for their Place, their *own* Place (*m*), the Place prepared for them of *this ſort only*. As the Lord Jeſus ſaid once of the *Phariſees*, *Theſe ſhall receive greater Damnation* (*n*).

Barren Fig Tree, fruitleſs Profeſſor, Haſt thou conſidered that this *Fig Tree* is not acknowledged of God to be his, but is denied to be of his Planting, and of his bringing unto his Wedding? Doſt not thou ſee thou art called a *Thief*, and a *Robber*, that haſt either *climbed* up to, or *crept* in at another Place than the Door? Doſt thou not hear, there will be in God's Houſe *wooden* and *earthly* Profeſſors, and that no Place will ſerve to fit thoſe for Hell, but the Houſe, *Church*, the Vineyard of God! Barren *Fig Tree*, fruitleſs Chriſtian, do not thine Ears tingle?

And

(*l*) Rom. ix. 21, 22. (*m*) Acts i. 25. (*n*) Luke xx. 47.

And (He) *came and sought Fruit thereon.*

When a Man hath got a Profession, and is crouded into the Church and House of God; the Question is not *now*, Hath he Life, hath he right Principles, *but hath he Fruit? He came seeking Fruit thereon.* It mattereth not who brought thee in hither? whether God or the Devil, or thine own vainglorious Heart: *But hast thou Fruit?* Dost thou bring forth Fruit unto God? *And let every one that nameth the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, depart from Iniquity* (*o*). He doth not say, and let every one that hath Grace, or let those that have the Spirit of God; but let *every one that nameth the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ depart from Iniquity.*

What do Men meddle with Religion for? Why do they call themselves by the Name of the Lord Jesus, if they have not the Grace of God, the Spirit of Christ (*p*). *God therefore expecteth Fruit:* What do they do in the Vineyard? Let them work, or get them out, the Vineyard must have La-

(*o*) 1 Tim. ii. 19. (*p*) Rom. viii. 9. Matt. xx. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

bourers in it: *Son, Go to work to Day in my Vineyard* (*q*). Wherefore, *Want of Grace*, and Want of Spirit, will not keep God from ſeeking Fruit: *And he came and ſought Fruit thereon.* *He* requireth that which *he* (*r*) ſeemeth to have: Every Man in the Vineyard, and Houſe of God promiſeth himſelf, profeſſeth to others, and would have all Men take it for granted, that an heavenly Principle is in him, Why then ſhould not God ſeek Fruit?

As for them therefore, that will retain the Name of Chriſtians, fearing God; and yet make no Conſcience of bringing forth Fruit to him: He ſaith to ſuch, *away, As for you, go ye, ſerve every one his Idols, and hereafter alſo; if ye will not hearken unto me* (*s*). Barren *Fig Tree*, doſt thou hear, God expecteth Fruit; God calls for Fruit; yea, God will ſhortly come *ſeeking* Fruit on this barren *Fig Tree*. Barren Fig Tree, either bear Fruit, or go out of the Vineyard, (and yet then thy Caſe will be unſpeakably damnable.) Yea, let me add, if thou ſhalt neither bear Fruit,

(*q*) Matth. xxi. 28. (*r*) Luke viii. 8. (*s*) Ezek. xx. 39.

Fruit, nor depart, God *will take his Name out of thy Mouth* (*t*): He will have Fruit. And I ſay farther, if thou wilt do neither, yet God in Juſtice and Righteouſneſs will ſtill come for Fruit. And it will be in vain for thee to count this *Auſterity:* He will *reap where he hath not ſowed, and gather where he hath not ſtrewed* (*u*). Barren *Fig Tree* doſt thou hear?

Q. *What if a Man have no Grace?*
A. Yes; ſeeing he hath a Profeſſion.

And he came and ſought Fruit (thereon).

A Church then, and a Profeſſion, are not Places where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves and Sins from God. Some, of old, thought, that becauſe they could cry, *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord,* that therefore they were delivered, or had a Diſpenſation to do the Abominations which they committed; as ſome in our Days. For, who, ſay they, have a Right to the

(*t*) Jer. xliv. 26. (*u*) Matth. xxv. 24, 25, 26.

Creatures, if not Christians, if not Professors, if not Church Members (*x*)? And from this Conclusion let go the Reins of their inordinate Affections after Pride, Ambition, Gluttony, pampering themselves without Fear (*y*), daubing themselves with the Lust-provoking Fashions of the Times; to walk with stretched out Necks, naked Breasts, frisled Foretops, wanton Gestures, in gorgeous Apparel, mixt with Gold and Pearl, and costly Array. I will not here make Inspection into their Lives, their Carriages at Home in their Corners, and secret Holes: But certainly, Persons thus spirited, thus principled, and thus inclined, have but empty Boughs, Boughs that want the Fruit that God expects, and that God will come down to seek.

Barren Fig Tree, thou art not licensed by thy Profession, nor by the Lord of the Vineyard, to bear *these* Clusters of *Gomorrah:* Neither shall the *Vineyard*, nor thy being *crouded* among the *Trees there*, *shelter* thee from the sight of the Eye of God. Many make Religion

(*x*) Jer. vii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, &c. (*y*) Jude 12.

Religion their *Cloak*, and Christ their *Stalking-horse*, and by that Means cover themselves, and hide their own Wickedness from Men: *But God seeth their Hearts* (*u*), has his Print upon the Heels of their Feet, and pondereth all their Goings: And at last, when their Iniquity is found to be hateful, he will either smite them with Hardness of Heart, and so leave them, or awaken them to bring forth Fruit. Fruit he looks for, seeks and expects, *barren Fig Tree!*

But what! Come into the Presence of God to sin: What! Come into the Presence of God *to hide thy Sin.* Alas, Man! The Church is God's Garden, and Christ Jesus is the great Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession. What! Come into the House that is called by my Name (*x*)! into the Place where my Honour dwelleth (*y*)! where mine Eyes and Heart are continually! What, come there to sin, to hide thy sin, to cloak thy sin! His *Plants* (*z*) are an *Orchard* with *pleasant Fruits*

(*u*) Luke xvi. 15. Job. xiii. 27. Prov. v. 21. *Ib.* xxi. 2. (*x*) Heb. iii. 1. Jer. vii. 8, 9, 10. (*y*) Psal. xxvi. 8. 1 Kings ix. 3. (*z*) Song iv. 13, 14, 15. *Ib.* vi. 11.

Fruits. And *every* Time he goeth into his Garden, it is to ſee the Fruits of the Valley, and to ſee if the Vine flouriſh, and if the Pomegranates bud.

Yea, ſaith he, *He came ſeeking Fruit on* this *Fig Tree.* The Church is the Place of God's Delight; where he ever deſires to be, there he is Night and Day. He is there to ſeek for Fruit, to ſeek for Fruit of all, and every Tree of the Garden. Wherefore aſſure thyſelf, O fruitleſs one, that thy Ways muſt needs be open before the Eyes of the Lord. *One black Sheep* is ſoon eſpied, although in company with; *that* is taken with the firſt caſt of the Eye; its different Colour ſtill betrays it. I ſay therefore, a Church and a Profeſſion are not Places where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves from God, that ſeek for Fruit, *My Vineyard*, ſaith God, *which is mine, is before me* (*b*).

And he came and ſought Fruit thereon (and found none.)

Barren

(*b*) Song viii. 12.

Barren Fig Tree, hearken, *The continual non-bearing of Fruit, is a dreadful Sign, that thou art to come to a dreadful End*, as the winding up of this *Parable* concludeth.

And found none. *None* at all, or *none* to God's liking: For when he ſaith, *He came ſeeking Fruit thereon*, he means Fruit *meet for God* (*c*), pleaſant Fruit, Fruit good and ſweet.

Alas! It is not any Fruit will ſerve; bad Fruit is counted none. *Every Tree that bringeth not forth* good *Fruit, is hewn down, and caſt into the Fire* (*d*).

1. There is a Fruit among Profeſſors that withers, and ſo never comes to be ripe; a Fruit that is *ſmitten* in the *Growth*, and comes not to *Maturity*, and this is reckoned *no Fruit*. This Fruit thoſe Profeſſors bear, that have *many* fair *Beginnings*, or Bloſſoms: That make *many* fair *Offers* of Repentance and Amendment: that begin to pray, to reſolve, and to break off their Sins by Righteouſneſs; but ſtop at thoſe Beginnings, and bring forth no *Fruit* to *Perfection*. This Man's Fruit is withered,

(*c*) Heb. vi. (*d*) Matth. iii. 10.

thered, wrinkled, ſmitten Fruit, and is in Effect, *no Fruit at all.*

2. There is an *haſty* Fruit, ſuch as is the *Corn upon the Houſe-top* (*e*), or that which ſprings up on the *Dunghill*, that runs up *ſuddenly*, violently; with great *Stalks*, and big *Shew*, and yet at *laſt* proves *empty* of Kernel. *This* Fruit is to be found in thoſe Poſſeſſors, that on a ſudden are ſo awakened, ſo convinced, and ſo affected with their Condition, that they ſhake the whole Family, the End-ſhip, the whole Town. For *a while* they cry haſtily, vehemently, dolefully, mournfully; and yet all is but a Pang, an Agony, a Fit; they bring not forth Fruit with Patience. Theſe are called thoſe haſty Fruits, *that ſhall be as a fading Flower* (*f*).

3. There is a Fruit that is *vile*, and *ill-taſted* (*g*), how long ſoever it be in growing (*h*); the Root is dried, and cannot convey a Sufficiency of Sap to the Branches to ripen the Fruit. Theſe are the Fruit of ſuch Profeſſors, whoſe Heart is eſtranged from Communion

(*e*) Pſal. cxxix. (*f*) Iſa. xxviii. 4. (*g*) Jer. xxiv. (*h*) Hoſ. ix. 16.

munion with the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe Fruit groweth *from themſelves* (*i*), from their Parts, Gifts, Strength of Wit, natural or moral Principles. Theſe, notwithſtanding they bring forth Fruit, are called *empty Vines*; ſuch as bring not forth Fruit to God.

Their Root is dried up, they ſhall bear no Fruit; yea, though they bring forth, yet will I ſlay, even the beloved Fruit of their Womb.

4. There is a Fruit that is *wild*, *I looked for Grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes* (*k*). I obſerve, That as there are *Trees* and *Herbs* that are *wholly* right, and noble; fit *indeed* for the Vineyard. So there are alſo their *Semblance*, but *wild*; not right, but ignoble. There is the *Grape* and the *Wild-grape*, the *Vine* and the *Wild-vine*, the *Roſe* and the *Canker-roſe*, *Flowers* and *Wild-flowers*, the *Apple* and the *Wild-apple*, which we call the *Crab*. Now Fruit from theſe *wild* Things, however they may pleaſe the *Children*, to play with, yet the *prudent* and *grave* count them of little, or no Value. There are alſo in the World a Generation

(*i*) Hoſ. x. 1. (*k*) Iſa. v. 4.

ration of Professors, that notwithstanding their Profession are wild by Nature; yea, such as were never cut out, or off, the *Wild Olive-tree*, nor never yet planted into the good *Olive-tree*. Now these can bring nothing forth but *Wild Olive-berries*, they cannot bring forth Fruit *unto God*. Such are all those that have lately taken up a Profession, and crept into the Vineyard without a New-birth, and the Blessing of Regeneration.

5. There is also untimely Fruit, *Even as a Fig Tree casteth her untimely Figs* (*l*). Fruit out of Season, and so no Fruit to God's liking.

There are *Two* Sorts of Professors subject to bring forth untimely Fruit.

1. They that bring forth (Fruit) *too soon*.

2. They that bring forth (Fruit) *too late*.

First, They that bring forth *too soon*. They are such as at *present* receive the Word with *Joy*, and *anon* before they have Root downwards, they thrust forth upwards; but having *no Root*, when the *Sun* ariseth they are *smitten*, and

(*l*) Rev. vi. 13.

and miſerably die without Fruit. Theſe Profeſſors are thoſe light and inconſiderate ones, that think nothing but Peace will attend the Goſpel; and ſo anon rejoice at the Tidings, without foreſeeing the Trouble: Wherefore when the Trouble comes, being unarmed, and ſo not able to ſtand any longer, they die and are withered, and bring forth no Fruit. *He that receiveth the Seed into ſtony Places, the ſame is he that heareth the Word, and anon with Joy receiveth it; yet hath he not Root in himſelf, but dureth for a while; for when Tribulation or Perſecution ariſeth, becauſe of the Word, by and by they are offended* (*m*). There is in *Iſa.* xxviii. mention made of ſome, *Whoſe glorious Beauty ſhall be a fading Flower*, becauſe it is Fruit *before Summer* (*n*). Both theſe are untimely Fruit.

Secondly, They alſo bring forth untimely Fruit, that ſtay *till the Seaſon is over*. God will have *his* Fruit in *his* Seaſon; I ſay, he will receive them of ſuch Men as ſhall render them to him in *their ſeaſons* (*o*); the miſſing

D of

(*m*) Matth. xiii. 20, 31. (*n*) Iſa. xxviii. 4.
(*o*) Matth. xxi. 41.

of the *Season* is dangerous, staying till the Door is shut (*p*), is dangerous. Many there be that come not till the Flood of God's Anger is raised, and too deep for them to wade through: *Surely, in the Floods of great Waters, they shall not come nigh unto him* (*q*). Esau's, *afterwards*, is fearful: *For ye know, that afterwards, when he would have inherited the Blessing, he was rejected; for he found no Place of Repentance; though he sought it carefully with Tears* (*r*).

So the Children of *Israel*, they brought to God the Fruits of Obedience too late; their, *Lo we be here*, came too late; their *We will go up* (*s*), came too late. The Lord had sworn *before that they should not possess the Land* (*t*). All these are such as bring forth *untimely* Fruit (*u*). It is the hard Hap of the Reprobate to do all Things too late (*x*); to be sensible of his want of Grace, too late (*z*); to be sorry for Sin, too late; to mourn for Sin, too late; to seek Repentance, too

(*p*) Matth. xxv. 10, 11. (*q*) Psal. xxii. 6. (*r*) Heb. xii. 16, 17. (*s*) Numb. xiv. 40, 41, 42. (*t*) Ver. 21, 22, 23. (*u*) Matth. xxv. 10. *Ib.* xxvii. 3. (*x*) Gen. iv. 13, 14. (*y*) Heb. xii. 27. (*z*) Luke xiii. 25, 26, 27.

too late; to ask for Mercy, and to desire to go to Glory, too late.

1. Thus you see that Fruit *smitten* in the Growth, that *withereth*, and that comes not to maturity, *is no Fruit* (*a*).

2. That *hasty* Fruit, such as the *Corn upon the House-top* (*b*) withereth also before it groweth up (*c*), *and is no Fruit.*

3. That the Fruit that is *vile* (*d*) and *ill-tasted, is no Fruit.*

4. That *wild* Fruit, *Wild-grapes* (*e*), *are no Fruit.*

5. That *untimely* Fruit, such as comes *too soon*, or that comes *too late*, such as come not in *their* Season, *are no Fruit.*

And he came and sought Fruit thereon, and found none.

Nothing will do but Fruit: *He looked for Grapes; when the Time of Fruit grew near, he sent his Servants to the Husbandmen that they might receive the Fruit of it* (*f*).

Quest.

(*a*) Luke viii. 14. (*b*) Psal. cxxix. 6. (*c*) Jer. ii. 4. (*d*) Isa. v. 4. (*e*) Rev. vi. (*f*) Matth. xxi. 34.

Quest. But what Fruit doth God expect?

Answ. Good Fruit. *Every Tree that bringeth not forth* good Fruit, *is hewn down* (*g*). Now before the Fruit can be good, the Tree must be good; for good Fruits make not a good Tree; *but a good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit*; *Do Men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thistles* (*h*). A Man must be good, else he can bring forth no good Fruit; he must have Righteousness imputed, that may stand good in God's Sight from the Curse of his Law. He must have a Principle of Righteousness in his Soul, else how should he bring forth good Fruits; and hence it is, that a Christian's Fruits are called, *The Fruits of the Spirit* (*i*), *the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ* (*k*). The Fruits of the Spirit, therefore the Spirit must be there; the Fruits of Righteousness, therefore Righteousness must *first* be there; but to particularize in a few Things briefly.

First,

(*g*) Matth. vii. 19. (*h*) Luke vi. 43, 44, 45. Matth. vii. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. (*i*) Gal. v. 22, 23. (*k*) Phil. i. 11.

First, God expecteth Fruit that will answer, and be worthy of the Repentance, which thou feignest thyself to have. Every one in a Profession, and that hath crowded into the Vineyard, pretendeth to *Repentance:* Now of every such Soul, God expecteth that the *Fruits* of Repentance be found to attend them. *Bring forth therefore Fruits meet for Repentance* (*l*), or answerable to thy Profession of the Doctrine of Repentance. *Barren Fig Tree*, Seeing thou art a Professor, and art got into the Vineyard; thou standest before the Lord of the Vineyard, as one of the Trees of the Garden: Wherefore He looketh for *Fruit* from *thee*, as from the *rest* of the *Trees* in the Vineyard; *Fruits* (*m*), I say, and *such* as may declare thee in Heart and Life, one that hath made sound Profession of Repentance. By thy Profession thou hast said, *I am sensible of the Evil of Sin:* Now then, live such a Life, *as* declares that thou art sensible of the Evil of Sin. By thy Profession thou hast said, *I am sorry for my Sin:* Why

(*l*) Matth. iii. 8. (*m*) Psal. li. 4. *Ibid.* xxxviii. 4. *Ib.* xl. 12.

then live such a Life as may declare this Sorrow. By thy Profession thou hast said, *I am ashamed of my Sin* (*n*): Ay, but live such a life that Men may see thy Shame for Sin (*o*). By thy Profession thou sayest, *I have turned from, and left off, and am become an Enemy to every Appearance of Evil* (*p*): Ah! But doth thy Life and Conversation declare thee to be such an one! *Take heed, barren Fig-tree, lest thy Life should give thy Profession the Lye.* I say again, Take heed, for God himself will come for Fruit; *And he sought Fruit thereon.*

You have some Professors, that are only Saints before Men, *when they are Abroad*; but are Devils and Vipers at *Home*; Saints by Profession, but Devils by Practice; Saints in Word, but Sinners in Heart and Life. These Men may have the Profession, but they want the *Fruits that become Repentance.*

Barren Fig-tree! Can it be imagined that those that *paint* themselves, did ever

(*n*) Psal. xxxviii. 18. Isa. lix. 20. (*o*) Jer. xxxi. 19. (*p*) Acts xxvi. 18. 1 Thes. v. 22.

ever repent of their *Pride*; or that those that *pursue* this World, did ever repent of their *Covetousness*; or that those who walk with *wanton Eyes*, did ever repent of their *fleshly Lusts*. Where, *barren Fig tree*, is the Fruit of these People's Repentance? Nay, do they not rather declare to the World, *That they have repented of their Profession?* Their Fruits look as if they had. Their *Pride* saith, they have repented of their *Humility*; their *Covetousness* declareth, that they are weary of *depending upon God*; and doth not thy *wanton* Actions declare, that thou *abhorrest Chastity?* Where is thy Fruit, *barren Fig-tree?* Repentance is not only a Sorrow, and a Shame for, but *a turning from sin to God* [q]; it is called *Repentance from dead Works*. Hast thou that godly Sorrow, that worketh *Repentance to Salvation, never to be repented of* [r]? How dost thou shew thy Carefulness, and clearing of thy self; thy Indignation against Sin; thy Fear of offending; thy vehement Desire to walk with God; thy Zeal for his Name, and Glory in the World

[q] Heb. vi. [r] 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11.

World; and what Revenge haſt thou in thy Heart againſt every Thought of Diſobedience?

But where is the Fruit of this Repentance? Where is thy Watching, thy Faſting, thy Praying againſt the Remainders of Corruption? Where is thy Self-abhorrence; thy Bluſhing before God, for the Sin that is yet behind? Where is thy Tenderneſs of the Name of God and his Ways? Where is thy Self-denial and Contentment? How doſt thou ſhew before Men the Truth of thy turning to God? *Haſt thou renounced the hidden Things of Diſhoneſty, not walking in Craftineſs* [s]? Canſt thou commend thy ſelf *to every Man's Conſcience in the ſight of God?*

And he ſought Fruit thereon.

Secondly, God expecteth Fruits that ſhall anſwer that Faith which thou makeſt Profeſſion of. The Profeſſor that is got into the Vineyard of God, doth feign that he hath the Faith, the Faith moſt holy, the Faith of *God's Elect.* Ah! But where are thy Fruits, Barren

[s] 2 Cor. iv. 2.

ren Fig-tree? The faith of the *Romans* was ſpoken of throughout the whole World; and the *Theſſalonians* Faith grew exceedingly.

Thou profeſſeſt to *believe* thou haſt a Share in *another* World; Haſt thou let go *this*, barren Fig-tree? Thou profeſſeſt thou believeſt in *Chriſt*; Is he thy Joy, and the Life of thy Soul? Yea; What Conformity unto Him, to his Sorrows and Sufferings? What Reſemblance hath his Crying [*t*] and Groaning, and Bleeding, and Dying wrought in thee? Doſt thou bear in thy Body the Dying of the Lord Jeſus? *And is alſo the Life of Jeſus made manifeſt in thy mortal Body?* Barren Fig-tree, *ſhew me thy Faith by thy Works* [*u*]. *Shew out of a good Converſation thy Works with Meekneſs of Wiſdom.*

What *fruit*, what *fruit*, Barren Fig-tree, what Degree of *Heart Holineſs?* for *Faith purifies the Heart* [*x*]: What *Love* to the Lord Jeſus? for *Faith worketh by Love* [*y*].

Thirdly, God expecteth Fruits, according to the Seaſons of Grace thou art under

[*t*] Phil. iii. 8, 9, 10. [*u*] Jam. ii. 18. Ib. iii. 1[illegible]
[*x*] Acts xv. 9. [*y*] Gal. v. 6.

under, according to the *Rain that cometh upon thee.* Perhaps thou art planted in a good Soil, by great Waters, that thou mighteſt bring forth Branches, and bear Fruit; that thou mighteſt be a goodly Vine or Fig Tree: Shall he not therefore ſeek for *Fruit*, for *Fruit anſwerable to the Means?* Barren Fig Tree, God expects it, and will find it too, if ever He bleſs thee. *For the Earth which drinketh in the Rain that comes oft upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs meet for him by whom it is dreſſed, receives Bleſſing from God; but that which beareth Thorns and Briars is rejected, and is nigh unto Curſing, whoſe End is to be burnt* (*c*).

Barren Soul, How many Showers of Grace, how many Dews from Heaven, how many Times have the Silver Streams of the City of God, *run gliding by thy Roots to cauſe thee to bring forth Fruit* (*d*)! Theſe Showers and Streams, and the Drops that hang upon thy Boughs, will all be accounted for (*e*): And will they not teſtify againſt thee, that thou oughteſt of right *to be burnt* (*f*)

(*d*) Heb. vi. 7. 8. (*e*) Rom. i. 13. (*f*) Col. iv. 5, 6.

burnt [g]! Hear and tremble, O thou barren Professor! *Fruits that become the Profession of the Gospel, the God of Heaven expecteth* [h]. The Gospel hath in it the Forgiveness of Sins, the Kingdom of Heaven, and eternal Life [i]; But what Fruit hath thy Profession of a Belief of these Things put forth in thy Heart and Life? Hast thou given *Thyself* to the Lord, and is all that thou hast, to be ventured for his Name in this World? Dost thou walk like one that is bought with a Price, even the Price of Christ's precious Blood?

Fourthly, The Fruit that God expecteth is such, as is meet for himself, Fruit that may glorify God; God's Trees *are Trees of Righteousness, the planting of the Lord,* that he *may be glorified* [k]; Fruit *thath tasteth of Heaven, Abundance* of *such* Fruit: For *herein,* saith Christ, *is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much* Fruit [l]. Fruits of all kinds, *new and old,* the Fruits of the Spirit is in *all Goodness, and Righteousness,*

[g] 2 Cor. viii. 5. [h] Acts iv. 32. [i] 1 Cor. vi. 10. [k] Isa. lxi. 3. [l] John xv. 8.

teousness, and Truth. Fruits before the World, Fruits before the Saints, Fruits before God, Fruits before Angels.

O my Brethren, what manner of Persons ought we to be, who have subscribed to the Lord, and have called ourselves by the Name of *Israel? One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the Name of* Jacob; *and another shall subscribe with his Hand unto the Lord, and sirname himself by the Name of* Israel (*l*) Barren Fig-tree, hast thou *subscribed*, hast thou *called* thyself by the Name of *Jacob*? And *sirnamed* thyself by the Name of *Israel?* All this thou pretendest to, (*m*) who art got into the Vineyard, who art placed among the Trees of the Garden of God: God doth therefore look for *such* Fruits as is worthy of his Name, as is meet for him, as the Apostle saith, *We should walk worthy of God*; that is, so as that we may shew in every Place, that the Presence of God is *with* us, his Fear *in* us, and his Majesty and Authority upon *our Actions.* Fruits meet for him, *such* a Dependance upon him, *such* Trust

(*l*) Isa. xliv. 5. (*m*) 1 Thes. ii. 12.

Truſt in his Word, *ſuch* Satisfaction in his Preſence, *ſuch* a truſting of him with all my Concerns, and *ſuch* Delight in the Enjoyment of him, *that may demonſtrate that his Fear is in my Heart*, that my Soul is wrapt up in him, and that my Body and Soul, and Eſtate, and all, are in Truth, through his Grace, at his Diſpoſe, *Fruit meet for him.* Hearty Thanks, and bleſſing God for Jeſus Chriſt, for his good Word, for his Free-Grace, for the Diſcovery of himſelf in Chriſt to the Souls, ſecret Longing after another World, Fruit *meet* for him. Liberality to the poor Saints, to the poor World; a Life, in Word and Deed exemplary, a patient and quiet enduring of all Things, till I have done and ſuffered the whole Will of God, which he hath appointed for me. *That on the good Ground are they, which in an honeſt and good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with Patience* (*k*). This is bringing forth Fruit unto God. *Having our Fruit unto Holineſs, and our End everlaſting Life*, Rom. vii. 4. vi. 22. and xiv. 8.

(*k*) Luke viii. 15.

Fifthly, The Lord expects Fruit *becoming the Vineyard of God.* The Vineyard, ſaith he, *is a very fruitful Hill* (*l*); witneſs the Fruit brought forth in all Ages: The moſt barren Trees that ever grew in the Wood of this World, when planted in this Vineyard *by the God of Heaven*, what Fruit to Godward have they brought forth? *Abel* offered the *more* excellent Sacrifice (*m*). *Enoch walked with God three hundred Years*; *Noah* by his Life of Faith, *condemned the World, and became Heir of the Righteonſneſs which is by Faith. Abraham left his Country, and went out after God, not knowing whither he went. Moſes* left a Kingdom, *and run the Hazard of the Wrath of the King*, for the Love he had to God and Chriſt. What ſhall I ſay of them who had *Trials, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection? They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain with the ſword: They wandered about in ſheep-ſkins and goat-ſkins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented. Peter* left his Father, Ship and Nets(*n*). *Paul* turned off

(*l*) Iſa. v. 1. (*m*) Matth. iv. 18, 19. (*n*) Heb. xi. 4, to 37.

off from the Feet of *Gamaliel.* Men brought their Goods and Poſſeſſions, (the Price of them) and caſt it down at the Apoſtles Feet; and others brought their Books together, and burnt them, *curious Books*, though they were worth fifty thouſand Pieces of Silver (*o*). I could add, how many willingly offered themſelves in all Ages, and their *all*, for the worthy Name of the Lord Jeſus; to be wracked, ſtarved, hanged, burned, drowned, pulled in Pieces, and a thouſand Calamities. Barren Fig-Tree, the Vineyard of God hath been a fruitful Place—What doſt thou there? What doſt thou bear? God expects Fruit according to, or becoming the Soil of the Vineyard.

Sixthly, The Fruit which God expecteth, is ſuch as becometh God's Huſbandry and Labour. The Vineyard is *God's Huſbandry, or Tillage. I am the Vine*, ſaith Chriſt, *and my Father is the Huſbandman* (*p*). And again, *Ye are God's Huſbandry, ye are God's Building* (*q*). The Vineyard, God fences

 it,

(*o*) Acts xix. 18, 19, 20. (*p*) John xv. 1. (*q*) 1 Cor. iii. 9.

it, God gathereth out the Stones, God builds the Tower, and the Wine-press in the midst thereof (*r*). Here is Labour, here is Protection, here is removing of Hindrances, here is convenient Purgation, and all *that there might be Fruit.*

Barren Fig-Tree, What Fruit hast thou? Hast thou Fruit becoming the Care of God, the Protection of God, the Wisdom of God, the Patience and *Husbandry of God?* It is the Fruit of the Vineyard, that is either the Shame or the Praise of the Husbandman. *I went by the field of the slothful,* said Solomon, *and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding. And lo, it was grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof* (*s*).

Barren Fig-tree, If Men should make a Judgment of the Care, and Pains, and Labour of God in his Church by the Fruit thou bringest forth, what might they say, is he not slothful, is he not careless, is he not without Discretion! O thy *Thorns,* thy *Nettles,* thy *barren Heart,* and *barren Life,* is a continual Provocation to the Eyes of his

(*r*) Isa. v. (*s*) Prov. xxiv. 30, 31, 32.

his Glory, as likewiſe a Diſhonour to the Glory of his Grace.

Barren Fig-Tree, haſt thou heard all theſe Things, I will add yet one more.

And he came and ſought Fruit thereon.

The Queſtion is not now, what thou thinkeſt of thyſelf, nor what all the People of God think of thee; but what thou ſhalt be found in that Day, when God ſhall ſearch thy Boughs for Fruit. When Sodom was to be ſearched for Righteous Men, God would not, in that Matter, truſt his faithful Servant Abraham, but ſtill as Abraham interceded, God anſwered, *If I find fifty, or forty, or five there, I will not deſtroy the City* (*t*). Barren Fig-tree, what ſayeſt thou? God will come down to ſee, God will make ſearch for Fruit himſelf.

" And he came and ſought Fruit thereon, and found *(none)*. Then ſaid he to the Dreſſer of the Vineyard, Behold, theſe *three* Years I come ſeeking Fruit on this Fig-tree, and find none;

(*t*) Gen. xviii. 20, 21, 26, 27.

cut it down, why cumbreth it the Ground?"

These Words are the Effect of God's Search into the Boughs of a barren Fig-tree; He sought Fruit, and found *none, none* to his liking, *none* pleasant and good. Therefore, *first*, He complains of the Want thereof to the Dresser, calls him to come, and see, and take Notice of the Tree; then signified his Pleasure, he will have it removed, taken away, cut down from cumbring the Ground.

Observe, The barren Fig-tree is the Object of God's Displeasure, God cannot bear with a fruitless Professor.

[*Then*] said He, *&c.*

Then, after this Provocation; *then*, after he had sought and found no Fruit; *then*, this Word (then) doth shew us a kind of an inward Disquietness; as he saith also in another Place, upon a like Provocation. Then "the Anger of the Lord, and his Jealousy shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot

blot out his Name from under Heaven (*u*).

Then; It is intimated that he was *now* come to a Point, to a Resolution what to do with this Fig-tree. *Then said he to the Dresser of this Vineyard*, that is, to Jesus Christ; *Behold*, as much as to say, Come hither, here is a Fig-tree in my Vineyard, here is a Professor in my Church, that is barren, that beareth no Fruit.

Observe, However the barren Professor thinks of himself on Earth, the Lord cries out in Heaven against him. *And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard. I will take away the Hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and I will break down the Walls thereof, and it shall be trodden down* (*x*).

Behold, these three Years I come seeking Fruit, &c.

Observe, These *three Years*. God cries out that his Patience is abused, that his Forbearance is abused: Behold, these three Years I have waited, forborn; these three Years I have deferred mine Anger; *Therefore will I stretch out mine Hand against thee,*

(*u*) Deut. xxix. 18, 19, 20. (*x*) Isa. v. 5.

thee, and destroy thee, I am weary with repenting, Jer. xv. 6.

Observe, These *three Years.* God layeth up all the Time; I say, a Remembrance of all the Time, that *a barren Fig Tree*, or a fruitless Professor, *mis-spendeth in this World.* As he saith also of *Israel* of old, *Forty Years long was I grieved with this Generation* (*y*).

These three Years, &c.

Observe, These *three* Seasons; God remembers how many Seasons thou hast mis-spent. For these *three Years* signify so many Seasons. *And when the Time of Fruit drew nigh* (*z*), that is, about the Season, that they begin to be ripe, or that according to the Season, might so have been. *Barren Fig Tree*, thou hast had Time, Seasons, Sermons, Ministers, Afflictions, Judgments, Mercies, and what not? and *yet hast not been fruitful:* Thou hast had Awakenings, Reproofs, Threatenings, Comforts, and yet hast not been fruitful: Thou hast had Patterns, Examples, Citations, Provocations, and yet hast not been fruitful. Well, God hath laid up *thy three Years* with himself. He remem-

(*y*) Psal. xcv. 10. (*z*) Matth. xxi. 34.

remembers every Time, every Season, every Sermon, every Minister, Affliction, Judgment, Mercy, Awakening, Pattern, Example, Citation, Provocation: He remembers *all*, as he said of *Israel* of old: *They have tempted me these* Ten *Times, and have not hearkened to my Voice* (*a*). And again, *I remember all their Wickedness* (*b*).

These three *Years*, &c.

He seeks for the Fruit of every Season: He will not that any of his Sermons, Ministers, Afflictions, Judgments, or Mercies, *should be lost*, or stand for insignificant Things; he will have *according to the Benefit bestowed* (*c*): He hath not done without a Cause all that he hath done, and therefore he looketh for Fruit: Look to it *barren Fig Tree.*

I came (seeking) *Fruit.*

Observe, This Word (*seeking*) signifies a *narrow Search*: For when a Man *seeks* for Fruit on a Tree, he goes round it, and round it, now looking into this Bough, and then into that, he peeps into the inmost Boughs, and the

(*a*) Numb. xiv. 22. (*b*) Hos. vii. 2. (*c*) 2 Chron. xxxii. 24, 25. Ezek. xiv. 23.

the lowermoſt Boughs, if perhaps Fruit may be thereon.

Barren Fig Tree, God will look into *all thy Boughs,* he will be with thee in thy Bed-fruits, thy Midnight-fruits, thy Cloſet-fruits, thy Family-fruits, thy Converſation-fruits, to ſee if there be any amongſt all theſe that are fit for, or worthy of the Name of, the God of Heaven. *He ſees what the Children of* Iſrael *do in the dark.* Ezek. viii. 12. *All Things are open unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Heb. iv. 12.

Seeking Fruit on (this) *Fig Tree.*

Obſerve, I told you before, that he keeps in Remembrance the Times and Seaſons that the barren Profeſſor had wickedly miſ-ſpent. Now, for as much as he alſo *pointeth out the Fig Tree.* This *Fig Tree.* It ſheweth that the barren Profeſſor, above all Profeſſors, is a continual *Odium* in the Eyes of God. This *Fig Tree, This* Man *Coniah* (*d*), *This* People draw nigh me with their Mouth, but have removed

(*d*) Jer. xxii. 28.

moved their Hearts far from me (*e*). God knows *who they are* among all the *Thousands* of *Israel*, that are the barren and fruitless Professors, his Lot will fall upon the Head of *Achan*, though he be hid among *Six hundred thousand* Men. *And he brought his Houshold, Man by Man, and* Achan, *the Son of* Carmi, *the Son of* Zabdi, *the Son of* Zerah, *of the Tribe of* Judah, *was taken* (*f*). *This* is the *Achan*, *this* is the Fig Tree, *this* is the barren Professor.

Simile, There is a Man hath an Hundred *Trees* in his Vineyard, and at the Time of the Season, he walketh into his Vineyard, to see how the Trees flourish, and as he goes, and views, and pries, and observes how they are hanged with Fruit: Behold, he comes to one where he findeth naught but Leaves. Now he makes a Stand, looks upon it again and again, he looks also here and there, above and below, and if after all this Seeking, *he finds nothing but Leaves thereon*: Then he begins to cast in Mind, how he may know this Tree next Year, what

(*e*) Isa. xxix. 13. Matth. xv. 8. (*f*) Josh. vii. 17, 18.

what ſtands next it, or how far 'tis off the Hedge; but if there be nothing there that may be as a Mark to know it by, then he takes his *Hook*, and giveth it a private Mark. (*And the Lord ſet a Mark upon* Cain (*g*), ſaying, Go thy ways, fruitleſs Fig Tree; *Thou haſt ſpent this Seaſon in vain.*

Yet doth he not cut it down, I will try it another Year; may be this was not a *hitting* Seaſon. Therefore he comes again *next* Year to ſee if now it have Fruit, but as he found it *before*, ſo he finds it *now*, *barren*, *barren*, every Year *barren*; he looks again, *but finds no Fruit*. Now he begins to have *ſecond* Thoughts: How! neither hit *laſt* Year, nor *this*. Surely the Barrenneſs is not in the Seaſon; ſure the Fault is in the Tree. However, I will ſpare it this Year alſo, but will give it a *ſecond* Mark: And it may be, *he toucheth it with his Iron* (*h*), becauſe he begins to be angry.

Well, at the *third* Seaſon He comes again *for Fruit*, but the *third* Year is like the *firſt* and *ſecond*, *no Fruit yet*; *it only cumbreth the Ground*; What now muſt

(*g*) Gen. iv. (*h*) 1 Tim. iv. 2.

muſt be done with this Fig Tree? Why, *The Lord will lop its Boughs with Terror* (*i*); yea, the Thickets of thoſe Profeſſors *with Iron. I have waited,* ſaith God, *theſe three Years*; I have miſſed of Fruit *theſe three Years*; It hath been a Cumber-ground *theſe three Years*; *Cut it down.* Precept hath been upon Precept, and Line upon Line, one Year after another, for *theſe three Years,* but no Fruit can be ſeen, I find none, fetch out the Ax. I am ſure *this* is the Fig Tree, I know it from the firſt Year, *Barrenneſs* was its Sign then, *Barrenneſs* is its Sign now, make it fit for the Fire. *The Ax is laid to the Root of the Trees, every Tree therefore that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewn down, and caſt into the Fire* (*k*).

Obſerve, My Brethren, ſeriouſly, *God's Heart cannot ſtand towards a barren Fig-tree.* You know thus it is with yourſelves: If you have a Tree in your Orchard, or Vineyard, that doth *only cumber the Ground,* you cannot look upon that Tree with Pleaſure, with Complacency and Delight: No, if you do but go by it, if you do but

(*i*) Iſa. x. 33, 34. (*k*) Matth. iii. 10.

caſt your Eye upon it; yea, if you do but think of that Tree, you threaten it in your Heart, ſaying, *I will hew thee down ſhortly*; *I will to the Fire with thee ſhortly*. And it is in vain for any to think of perſuading of you to ſhew Favour to the *Barren Fig-tree*, and if they ſhould perſuade, your Anſwer is irreſiſtible, *It yields me no profit*, it takes up room, and doth no good, a better may grow in its room.

Cut it down.

Thus when the Godly among the *Jews* made Prayers that rebellious *Iſrael* might not be caſt out of the Vineyard (*l*), what ſaith the Anſwer of God. *Though* Moſes *and* Samuel *ſtood before me, yet could not my Mind be toward this People: Wherefore caſt them out of my Preſence, and let them go forth* (*m*). What a Reſolution is here, *Moſes* and *Samuel* could do almoſt any Thing with God in Prayer. How many Times did *Moſes* by Prayer turn away God's Judgments from *even* Pharaoh *himſelf!* yea, how many Times did he by Prayer

(*l*) Jer. xiv. 17, 18, 19, 20. (*m*) Jer. xv. 1.

Prayer preſerve *Iſrael*, when in the Wilderneſs, from the Anger and Wrath of God (*n*)? *Samuel* is reckoned excellent this Way, yea, ſo excellent, that when *Iſrael* had done that fearful Thing, as to reject the Lord, and chuſe them another King; he prayed, and the Lord ſpared, and forgave them (*o*): But yet neither *Moſes* nor *Samuel can ſave a Barren Fig-tree.* No; though *Moſes* and *Samuel ſtood* before me, that is, pleading, arguing, interceding, ſupplicating, and beſeeching, yet could they not incline mine Heart to this People.

Cut it down.

Ay, but Lord it is a *Fig-tree*, a Fig-tree! if it was a *Thorn*, or a *Bramble*, or a *Thiſtle*, the Matter would not be much; but it is a *Fig-tree*, or a Vine; Well, but mark the Anſwer of God: *Son of Man, what is the Vine-tree, more than any Tree, or than a Branch that is among the Trees of the Foreſt, ſhall Wood be taken thereof to do any Work? or will Men*

(*n*) Pſal. cvi. 23. Ibid. xcix. 6. (*o*) 1 Sam. xii.

take a Pin thereof to hang any Vessel thereon (*p*)? If Trees that are set or planted for Fruit, *bring not forth that Fruit*, there is betwixt them and the Trees of the Forest, *no Betterment at all*, unless the Betterment lieth in the Trees of the Wood, for they are fit to build withal; but a *Fig-tree*, or a *Vine*, *if they bring not forth Fruit*; yea, good Fruit, they are fit for nothing at all, but to be cut down, and prepared for the Fire; and so the Prophet goes on, "Behold it is cast into the Fire "for Fuel, if it serve not for Fruit, "it will serve for Fuel, and so the Fire "devoureth both the Ends of it, and "the Middle of it is burnt (*q*)."

Ay, but these *Fig-trees* and *Vines* are Church-Members, Inhabiters of *Jerusalem*. So was the *Fig-tree*, mentioned in the *Text*: But what Answer hath God prepared for these *Objections*, Why, "Thus saith the Lord God, as "the Vine-tree among the Trees of "the Forest, which I have given to "the Fire for Fuel, so will I give the "Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*. And I "will set my Face against them, they "shall

(*p*) Ezek. xv. 2, 3. (*q*) Ver. 4.

" ſhall go from one Fire, and another
" Fire ſhall devour them (*r*)."

Cut it down.

The Woman that delighteth in her Garden, if ſhe have a *Slip* there, ſuppoſe (if it was fruitful) ſhe would not take *five* Pounds for it. *Yet if it bear no Fruit*, if it wither, and dwindle, and die, and turn Cumber-ground only, *it may not ſtand in her Garden.* Gardens and Vineyards are Places for Fruit, for Fruit according to the Nature of the Plant or Flowers. Suppoſe ſuch a Slip as I told you of before, ſhould be in your Garden, and there die: *Would you let it abide in your Garden?* No; away with it, away with it. The Woman comes into her Garden towards the Spring, where firſt ſhe gives it a *ſlight* caſt with her Eye; then ſhe ſets to gathering out the *Weeds*, and *Nettles*, and *Stones*, takes a *Beſom* and *ſweeps* the *Walks:* This done, ſhe falls to *prying* into her *Herbs* and *Slips*, to ſee if *they* live, to ſee if they are likely to *grow.* Now, *if ſhe comes to one that is*

(*r*) Ezek. xv. 6, 7.

dead, that ſhe is ſure will not grow, up ſhe pulls that, and makes to the Heap of Rubbiſh with it, where ſhe deſpiſingly caſts it down, and valueth it *no more* than a *Nettle*, or a *Weed*, or than the *Duſt* ſhe hath ſwept out of her *Walks*. Yea, if any that ſee her, ſhould ſay, Why do you ſo? The Anſwer is ready, 'Tis dead, 'tis dead at Root: If I had let it ſtand, 'twould but have cumbered the Ground. " The " ſtrange Slips (*and alſo the dead ones*) " they muſt be an Heap in the Day of " Grief, and of deſperate Sorrow (*s*)."

Cut it down.

There be *two* Manner of cutting down.

Firſt, When a Man is caſt out of the Vineyard.

Secondly, When a Man is caſt out of the World.

Firſt, When a Man is caſt out of the Vineyard. And that is done *two* Ways.

1. *By an immediate Hand of God.*

2. *By*

(*s*) Iſa. xvii. 10, 11.

2. *By the Church's due Execution of the Laws and Cenſures which Chriſt for that Purpoſe had left with his Church.*

Firſt, God cuts down the Barren Fig tree *by an immediate Hand*, ſmiting his Roots, blaſting his Branches, and ſo takes him away from among his People. "Every Branch, *ſaith Chriſt*, "that beareth not Fruit in me, He, *my* "*Father*, taketh away (*t*)." He taketh him out of the Church, He taketh him away from the Godly. There are *two* Things by which God taketh the *barren* Profeſſor from among the Children of God.

Firſt, *Strong Deluſions.*

Secondly, *Open Prophaneneſs.*

Firſt, By ſtrong Deluſions (*u*), ſuch as beguile the Soul with damnable Doctrines, that *ſwerve* from Faith and Godlineſs (*x*), "They have choſe their "own Ways, *ſaith God*, and their Soul "delighteth in their Abominations; I "alſo will chuſe their Deluſions, and "will bring their Fears upon them(*y*)." I will ſmite them with Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Heart, and failing of Eyes, and

(*t*) John xv. 2. (*u*) Iſa. lxvi. 3, 4. (*x*) Ib. vi. 9, 10. (*y*) 1 Kings xxii. 20, 21, 22.

and will alſo ſuffer the Tempter to tempt and effect his helliſh Deſigns upon them; " God will ſend them ſtrong " Deluſions, that they may believe a " Lie, that they may all be damned " who believe not the Truth, but had " Pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs (z)."

Secondly, Sometimes God takes away a *barren* Profeſſor by open Profaneneſs. There is one that hath taken up a Profeſſion of that *Worthy Name, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; but this Profeſſion is but a Cloak, he ſecretly practiſeth Wickedneſs; he is a Glutton, a Drunkard, or Covetous, or Unclean. Well, ſaith God, I will looſe the Reins of this Profeſſor, I will give him up *to his vile Affections*, I will looſe the Reins of his Luſts before him, he ſhall be entangled with his beaſtly Luſts, he ſhall be overcome of ungodly Company. Thus they that turn aſide to their own crooked Ways, " The Lord ſhall lead them " forth with the Workers of Iniqui- " ty (a)." This is God's Hand immediately: God is now dealing with this Man *himſelf*. *Barren Fig-tree*, hearken, Thou art crouded into a Profeſſion,

(z) 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11, 12. (a) Pſal. cxxv. 5.

Profeſſion, art got among the Godly, and there art a Scandal to the holy and glorious Goſpel; but withal ſo cunning, that like the Sons of *Zeruiah*, thou art too hard for the Church. She knows not how to deal with thee: Well, ſaith God, I will deal with that Man myſelf: "I will anſwer that Man "by myſelf (*b*);" he that ſets up his Idols in his Heart, and puts the Stumbling-block of his Iniquity before his Face, and yet comes and appears before me, "I will ſet my Face againſt that "Man, and will make him a Sign and "a Proverb, and I will cut him off "from the midſt of my People, and ye "ſhall know that I am the Lord."

But, Secondly, God doth ſometimes cut down the *barren Fig-tree*, by the Church, by the Church's due Execution of the Laws and Cenſures, which Chriſt for that Purpoſe hath left with his Church (*c*). This is the Meaning of that in *Matth.* xviii. 1 *Cor.* v. And that in *Timothy* (*d*), upon which now I ſhall not enlarge. But which Way ſoever God dealeth with thee, *O thou barren*

(*b*) Ezek. xiv. 7, 8. (*c*) Matth. viii. 17, 18.
(*d*) 1 Tim. i. 20.

barren Fig-tree, whether by himſelf immediately, or by his Church, it amounts to one and the ſame. For if timely Repentance prevent not, *the End of that Soul is Damnation.* They are blaſted, and withered, and gathered by Men, God's Enemies, and at laſt being caſt into the Fire, *burning muſt be their End* (*e*). "That which beareth "Briars and Thorns, is nigh unto "curſing, whoſe End is to be burnt (*f*)."

But again, ſometimes by *Cut it down,* God means, caſt it out of the World: Thus he *cut* down *Nadab* and *Abihu,* when *he burnt them up with Fire from Heaven* (*g*): Thus he *cut down* Corah, Dathan *and* Abiram, *when he made the Earth to ſwallow them up* (*h*): Thus he *cut down* Saul, *when he gave him up to fall upon the Edge of his own Sword, and died* (*i*): Thus he *cut down* Ananias, *with* Sapphira *his Wife, when he ſtruck them down dead in the midſt of the Congregation* (*k*). I might here alſo diſcourſe of *Abſalom, Ahitophel* (*l*) and *Judas,* who were *all three hanged*; the *firſt*

(*e*) John xv. 6. (*f*) Heb. vi. 8. (*g*) Lev. x. 1, 2, 3. (*h*) Numb. xvi. 31, 32, 33. (*i*) 1 Sam. xxxi. 4. (*k*) Acts v., 10. (*l*) 2 Sam. xvii. 2. Ib. xvii. 23.

first by God's revenging Hand, the *other* were given up of God to be their own Executioners (*m*). These were barren and unprofitable *Fig-trees*, such as God took no Pleasure in, therefore he commanded, *to cut them down.* The *Psalmist* saith, "He shall take them a-"way as with a Whirlwind, both liv-"ing and in his Wrath," *Psal.* lviii. 9.

Barren Fig-tree, hearken; God calls for the Ax, his Sword (*n*), bring it hither, here is a barren Professor, *Cut him down, Why cumbereth he the Grouud?*

Why cumbereth it the Ground?

By these Words the Lord suggesteth *Reasons* of his Displeasure against the Barren Fig-tree, *It cumbereth the Ground.* The Holy Ghost doth not only take an Argument from its *Barrenness*, but because it is a *Cumber-ground, therefore cut it down*: Wherefore it must needs be a Provocation.

1. Because, as much as in him lieth, he disappointeth the Design of God in Planting his Vineyard. *I looked that it should bring forth Fruit.*

2. It

(*m*) Psal lviii. 9. (*n*) Ezek. xxi. 9, 10.

2. It hath alſo abuſed his Patience, his *long*, his *three Years Patience.*

3. It hath alſo abuſed his *Labour*; his Pains, his Care, and Providence or Protection and Preſervation; for he hedges his Vineyard, and walls it about (*o*). *Cumber-ground! all theſe Things thou abuſeſt.* He waters his Vineyard, and looks to it Night and Day (*p*); but all theſe Things thou haſt abuſed.

Farther, There are other Reaſons of God's Diſpleaſure. As,

Firſt, A *Cumber-ground* is a very Mock and Reproach to Religion, a Mock and Reproach to the Ways of God, to the People of God, to the Word of God, and to the Name of Religion. It is expected on all Hands, that *all the Trees* in the Garden of God, ſhould be fruitful. *God* expects Fruit, the *Church* expects Fruit, the *World*, even the *World* conclude that Profeſſors *ſhould be fruitful in good Works*; I ſay, the very *World* expecteth that Profeſſors ſhould be better than themſelves: But, *Barren Fig-tree*, thou diſap-

(*o*) Iſa. li. 2, 3. (*p*) Ib. xxvii. 1, 2, 3.

diſappointeſt all: Nay, haſt thou not learned *the wicked ones* thy Ways (*q*)? Haſt thou not learnt them to be more wicked by thy Example? (but that's by the by). *Barren Fig-tree*, thou haſt diſappointed others, and *muſt be diſappointed thyſelf. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground.*

Secondly, The Barren Fig-tree *takes up the Room where a better Tree might ſtand*; I ſay, it takes up the Room, it keeps, ſo long as it ſtands where it doth, a fruitful Tree out of that Place, and therefore it muſt be *cut down. Barren Fig-tree*, Doſt thou hear? Becauſe the *Jews* ſtood fruitleſs in the Vineyard, Therefore ſaith God, "The "Kingdom of Heaven ſhall be taken "from you, and ſhall be given to a "Nation that ſhall render him their "Fruits in their Seaſon (*r*)." The *Jews* for their Barrenneſs were *cut down*, and a more fruitful People ſet in their Room. As *Samuel* alſo ſaid to barren *Saul* (*s*), "The Lord hath rent the "Kingdom from thee, and hath given "it to a Neighbour of thine, that

G "is

(*q*) Jer. ii. 7. (*r*) Matth. xxi. 33—41. (*s*) 1 Sam. xv. 28.

" is better than thou." The unprofitable Servant *must be cast out* (1), must *be cut down.*

Cumber-ground! How many hopeful, inclinable, forward People, hast thou by thy fruitless and unprofitable Life, kept out of the Vineyard of God? for thy Sake have these People stumbled at Religion: By thy Life have they been kept from applying themselves to the proper Means for their own Salvation. Thou hast been also a Means of hardening others, and of quenching, and killing weak Beginnings. Well, *Barren Fig-tree! Look to thyself,* (thou will not go to Heaven thyself, and them that would, thou hindereſt.) Thou must not always cumber the Ground, nor always hinder the Salvation of others: Thou shalt be *cut down, and another shall be planted in thy Room.*

Thirdly, The *Cumber-ground* is a *Sucker,* he draws away the Heart and Nourishment *from the other Trees.* Were the *Cumber-ground cut down,* the other would be more fruitful; he draws away

(1) Matth. xxv. 27.

away that Fatneſs of the Ground to himſelf, that would make the other more hearty and fruitful. " One Sin-" ner deſtroyeth much Good (*u*).

The *Cumber-ground* is a very *Drone* in the *Hive*, that eats up the *Honey* that ſhould feed the labouring Bee; he is a *Thief* in the *Candle*, that waſteth the *Tallow*, but giveth no *Light*; he is the *unſavory* Salt, that is fit for naught but the Dunghill. Look to it, *Barren Fig-tree*.

(*u*) Eccleſ. ix. 18.

Luke xiii. 8, 9.

And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this Year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear Fruit, well; and if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down.

THESE are the Words of the Dresser of the Vineyard, who, I told you, is Jesus Christ (for he made Intercession for the Transgressors (*x*). And they contain a Petition, presented to an offended Justice, praying that a little Time and Patience might be exercised towards the barren, cumberground *Fig-tree*.

In this Petition there are Six Things considerable.

First, That Justice might be *deferred*. O that Justice might be *deferred*, Lord, let it *alone*, &c. a while longer.

Secondly,

(*x*) Isa. liii. 12.

Secondly, Here is a *Time* prefixed, as a *Space* to try if more Means *will cure a barren Fig-tree, Lord, let it alone this Year also.*

Thirdly, The Means to help it, are propounded, *until I shall dig about it, and dung it.*

Fourthly, Here is also an Insinuation of a Supposition, that by thus doing, God's Expectation might be answered, *And if it bear Fruit, Well.*

Fifthly, Here is a Supposition that the *barren* Fig-tree may *yet* abide *barren,* when Christ hath done *what he will unto it, and if it bear Fruit,* &c.

Sixthly, Here is at last a *Resolution,* that if thou continue barren, *hewing Days will come upon thee.* And if it bear Fruit, Well; *And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

But to proceed according to my former Method, by Way of Exposition.

Lord, let it alone this Year also.

Here is astonishing Grace indeed, astonishing Grace! I say, that the Lord Jesus should concern himself with a *barren Fig-tree*; that he should step in to stop the Blow from a *barren Fig-tree*. True, he stopt the Blow but for a Time; But *why did he stop it at all?* Why did he not fetch out the Ax? Why did he not do Execution? Why did not he *cut it down? Barren Fig-tree!* 'tis well for thee that there is a Jesus at God's Right Hand, a Jesus of that extensive Goodness, *as to have Compassion for a barren Fig-tree*, or Justice had never let thee alone to cumber the Ground as thou hast done. When *Israel* also had sinned against God, down they had gone, *but that* Moses *stood in the Breach.* "Let me alone, *said God to him*, that I "may consume them in a Moment, "and I will make of thee a great "Nation (*y*)." *Barren Fig-tree*, Dost thou hear? Thou knowest not how oft the Hand of Divine Justice hath been up to strike, and how many Years since thou

(*y*) Exod. xxxii. 10.

thou hadſt been *cut down*, had not Jeſus caught hold of his Father's Ax, Let me alone, let me fetch my Blow, or *cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?* Wilt thou not hear yet, *barren Fig-tree?* Wilt thou provoke ſtill! *Thou haſt wearied Men*, and provoked the Juſtice of God; "And wilt thou weary my "Chriſt alſo (z)!"

Lord, let it alone this Year.

Lord, a little longer, let not a Soul be loſt for want of Means; *I will try*, I will ſee if I can make it fruitful, *I will not beg a long Life*, nor that it might ſtill be *barren* and ſo provoke thee. I beg for the Sake of the Soul, the immortal Soul, Lord, ſpare it *one Year only, one Year longer, this Year alſo*; if I do any good to it, it will be *in a little Time*. Thou ſhalt not be over-wearied with waiting, *one Year, and then*.

Barren Fig-tree, Doſt thou hear what Striving there is between the *Vine-dreſſer* and the *Huſbandman* for thy Life. *Cut it down*, ſays one, *Lord, ſpare*

(z) Iſa. vii. 13.

ſpare it, ſaith the other; *'Tis a Cumber-ground*, ſaith the Father, *One Year longer*, prays the Son, *Let it alone this Year alſo.*

Until I ſhall dig about it and dung it.

The Lord *Jeſus* by theſe Words ſuppoſes *two* Things, as Cauſes of want of Fruit in a *barren Fig-tree*, and *two* Things he propoſeth as a Remedy.

The Things that are a Cauſe of want of Fruit, are,

1. *'Tis Earth-bound*, Lord, the Fig-tree is *Earth-bound.*

2. *A want of warmer Means, of fatter Means.*

Wherefore accordingly he propoundeth;

Firſt, *To looſen the Earth, to dig about it.*

Secondly, *And then to ſupply it with Dung; to dig about it and dung it. Lord, let it alone this Year alſo, until I ſhall dig about it.* I doubt it is too much Ground-

Ground-bound, "The Love of this "World, and the Deceitfulness of "Riches (*a*)," lie too close to the Roots of the Heart of this Professor. The Love of Riches, the Love of Honours, the Love of Pleasures, are the Thorns that choak the Word. "For "all that is in the World, the Lusts of "the Flesh, the Lusts of the Eyes, and "the Pride of Life, are not of the Fa-"ther (but are Enmity to God (*b*)." How then (where these Things bind up the Heart) can there be Fruit brought forth to God? *Barren Fig-tree*, See how the Lord *Jesus*, by these very Words, suggesteth the Cause of thy Fruitlesness of Soul. The Things of this World *lie too close to the Heart*; the Earth with its Things have *bound up thy Roots*. "Thou "art an Earth-bound Soul, thou art "wrapt up in thick Clay. If any Man "love the World, the Love of the Fa-"ther is not in him." How then can he be fruitful in the Vineyard? This kept *Judas* (*c*) from the Fruit of caring for the Poor. This kept *Demas* (*d*) from the Fruit of *Self-denial*. And

(*a*) Luke xiv. (*b*) 1 John ii. 15, 16. (*c*) John xii. 6. (*d*) 2 Tim. iv. 10.

And this kept *Ananias* and *Sapphira* his Wife (*e*), from the goodly Fruit of Sincerity and Truth. What shall I say, "These are foolish and hurtful Lusts, "which drown Men in Destruction and "Perdition, for the Love of Money, "is the *Root* of all Evil." How then can good Fruit grow from such a *Root*, the *Root of all Evil?* "Which while "some covet after, they have erred "from the Faith, and pierced them-"selves through with many Sorrows." Mark, I say, it is an *evil Root*. Nay more, it is the *Root* of all *Evil* (*f*): How then can the Professor that hath such a *Root*, or a *Root* wrapped up in such earthly Things, as the Lusts, and Pleasures, and Vanities of this World, bring forth Fruit unto God!

Until I shall (dig) *about it.*

Lord, I will loose his Roots, *I will dig up this Earth*, I will lay his Roots bare, my Hand shall be upon him by Sickness, by Disappointments, by cross Providences; I will dig about him until he stands shaking and tottering, until he be ready to fall: Then, if ever,

(*e*) Acts v. 5—10. (*f*) 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

ever, he will ſeek to take faſter Hold. Thus, I ſay, deals the Lord Jeſus oft-times with the barren Profeſſor, *he diggeth about him*; he ſmiteth *one* Blow at his Heart, *another* Blow at his Luſts, a *third* at his Pleaſures, a *fourth* at his Comforts, *another* at his Self-conceitedneſs: Thus he diggeth about him: This is the Way to *take* bad Earth from his Roots, and to looſen his *Roots* from the Earth. *Barren Fig-tree*, See here the *Care*, the *Love*, the *Labour* and *Way*, which the Lord Jeſus, the Dreſſer of the Vineyard, is willing to take with thee, if happily thou mayeſt be made fruitful.

Until I ſhall dig about it, and (dung) *it.*

As the Earth, by binding the *Roots* too cloſely, may hinder the Trees being fruitful: So the Want of better Means, may be alſo a Cauſe thereof. And this is more than intimated by the Dreſſer of the Vineyard, *Until I ſhall dig about it, and dung it*, I will ſupply it with a more fruitful Miniſtry, with a warmer Word. I will give them Paſtors *after mine own Heart, I will dung them*; you know *Dung* is a more

more warm, more fat, more hearty, more ſuckering Matter, than is commonly the Place in which Trees are planted.

I will dig about it, and dung it, I will bring it under an *Heart-awakening* Miniſtry, the Means of Grace *ſhall be fat*, and good. I will alſo viſit it with Heart-awakening, Heart-warming, Heart-encouraging Conſiderations, I will apply warm Dung to *his Roots*, I will ſtrive with him by my Spirit (*g*), and give him ſome Taſtes of the heavenly Gift, and the Power of the World to come (*h*). I am loth he ſhould be loſt for want of Digging, "Lord, let "it alone this Year alſo, until I ſhall "dig about it, and dung it."

And if it bear Fruit, Well:

And if the Fruit of all my Labour, doth make this *Fig-tree* fruitful, I ſhall count my *Time*, my *Labour*, and *Means* well beſtowed upon it: And thou alſo, *O my God*, ſhalt be therewith much delighted: "For thou art gracious, and "merciful, and repenteſt thee of the "Evil,

(*g*) Gen. vi. 3. (*h*) Heb. vi. 2, 3.

Evil, which thou threateneſt to bring upon a People (*i*)."

Theſe Words therefore inform us, that if a *Barren Fig-tree*, a barren Profeſſor, ſhall now at laſt bring forth Fruit to God, it ſhall go well with that Profeſſor, it ſhall go well with that poor Soul. His former Barrenneſs, his former tempting of God, his Abuſe of God's Patience, and Long-ſuffering; his miſpending Year after Year, ſhall now be all forgiven him. Yea, God the Father, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt will now paſs by, and forget all, and ſay, *Well done*, at the laſt. When I ſay to the Wicked, *O wicked Man, thou ſhalt ſurely die*; if he then do that which is lawful and right, if he walk in the Statutes of Life, without committing Iniquity, he ſhall ſurely live, *he ſhall not die* (*k*).

Barren Fig-tree; Doſt thou hear? The Ax is laid to thy Roots, the Lord Jeſus prays God to ſpare thee; Hath he been *digging* about thee? Hath he been *dunging* of thee? *O Barren Fig-tree, Now* thou art come to the Point; if thou ſhalt *now* become

(*i*) Jonah iv. 2. (*k*) Ezek. iii. 3.

good, if thou ſhalt after a gracious manner ſuck in the Goſpel-dung, and if thou ſhalt bring forth Fruit unto God, *Well:* But if not, the Fire is the laſt. Fruit or the Fire, Fruit or the Fire, *Barren Fig-tree. If it bear Fruit, Well.*

And if not, then after that thou ſhalt cut it down.

And if not, &c. The Lord Jeſus by this *if*, giveth us to underſtand, that there is a Generation of Profeſſors in the World, that are incurable, that will not, that cannot repent (*l*), nor be profited by the Means of Grace: A Generation, I ſay, that will retain a Profeſſion, but will not bring forth Fruit; a Generation that will wear out the Patience of God, Time and Tide, Threatenings and Interceſſions, Judgments and Mercies; and after all *will be unfruitful.*

O the deſperate Wickedneſs that is in thine Heart; Barren Profeſſor, doſt thou hear, the Lord Jeſus ſtands yet in Doubt about thee? There is an *if* ſtands yet in the Way. I ſay, the Lord Jeſus

(*l*) Rom. ii.

Jesus stands *yet* in Doubt about thee, whether or no, at last thou wilt be good. Whether he may not labour in vain; whether his Digging and Dunging will come to more than lost Labour. " I gave her Space to repent, " and she repented not (*)." I digged about it, I dunged it, I gained Time, and supplied it with Means; but I laboured herein in vain, and spent my Strength for nought and in vain. Dost thou hear, *Barren Fig-tree!* There is yet a Question, " Whether it " will be well with thy Soul at last."

And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

There is nothing more exasperating to the Mind of a Man, than to find all his Kindness and Favour slighted: Neither is the Lord Jesus so provoked with any Thing, as when Sinners abuse his Means of Grace, if it be barren and fruitless under my Gospel, if it turn my Grace into Wantonness; if after digging and dunging, and waiting, it yet remain unfruitful, I will let *thee cut it down.*

(*) Rev. ii. 21.

Gospel Means applied is the *last Remedy* for a barren Professor; if the Gospel, if the Grace of the Gospel will not do, there can be nothing expected, but *cut it down. Then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, "thou "that killest the Prophets, and stonest "them that are sent unto thee, how "often would I have gathered thy "Children together, as an Hen ga-"thereth her Chickens under her "Wings, and ye would not? there-"fore your Houses are left unto you "desolate (*m*)." Yet it cannot be, but that this Lord Jesus, who at first did put a Stop to the Execution of his Father's Justice, because he desired to try more Means with the Fig-tree: I say, it cannot be, but that an Heart so full of Compassion, *as his is*, should be touched, to behold this Professor must *now* be cut down; "And when he was come near, He "beheld the City, and wept over it, "saying, If thou hadst known, even "thou, at least in this thy Day, "the

(*m*) Matth. xxiii. 37, 38.

" the Things that belong to thy
" Peace, but now they are hid from
" thine Eyes (*n*)."

After that, thou shalt cut it down.

When Christ *giveth thee over*, there is *no* Intercessor, *no* Mediator, *no* more Sacrifice for Sin: All is gone but *Judgment*, but the *Ax*, but a " certain
" fearful looking for of Judgment,
" and fiery Indignation, which shall
" devour the Adversaries (*o*)."

Barren Fig-tree, Take heed that thou comest not to these *last Words*, for these Words are a *Give-up*, a Cast-up, a Cast-up of a Cast-away: After *that thou shalt cut it down*. They are as much, as if Christ had said, Father, I begged for *more Time* for this barren Professor. I begged until I should *dig about it, and dung it*; but now, Father, the *Time is out*, the Year is ended, *the Summer is ended*, and no Good done; I have also tried with my *Means*, with the *Gospel*, I have laid also the *fat* and *hearty* Dung of the

(*n*) Luke xix. 41, 42. (*o*) Hebrews x. 26, 27, 28.

Gospel to it; *but all comes to nothing.* Father, I deliver up this Professor to thee again, I have *done*, I have *done* all, I have *done praying*, and endeavouring, *I will hold the Head of thine Ax* no *longer:* Take him into the Hands of Justice, do Justice, do the Law, *I will never beg for him more. After that thou shalt cut it down.*— "Wo unto them when I depart from "them (*p*)." Now is this Professor left *naked* indeed; *naked* to God, *naked* to Satan, *naked* to Sin, *naked* to the Law; *naked* to Death, *naked* to Hell (*q*), *naked* to Judgment, and *naked* to the Gripes of a *guilty* Conscience, and to the Torment of that *Worm* that never dies, and to that *Fire* that never shall be quenched. "See that ye "refuse not him that speaketh; "for if they escaped not, who re-"fuseth him that spake on Earth, "much more shall not we escape, "if we turn away from him that "speaketh from Heaven. (*r*)."— From this brief Pass through this *Parable*,

(*p*) Hosea ix. 12. (*b*) Mark ix. 43 to 48. (*r*) Heb. xii. 25.

Parable, you have these *two* general Observations:

Doctrine 1.

First, That even then when the Justice of God cries out, "I cannot "endure to wait on this barren Pro-"fessor any longer:" Then Jesus Christ intercedes for a *little more* Time, and a *little more* Patience, and a *little more* Striving with this Professor, if possible he may make him a fruitful Professor. "Lord, let it alone this "Year also, until I shall dig about it "and dung it, and if it bear Fruit, "Well," *&c.*

Doctrine 2.

Secondly, There are some Professors whose Day of Grace will end with, *Cut it down*, with Judgment; when Christ hath used all the Means for their Salvation.

The First of these Observations I shall pass by, and not meddle at all therewith: But shall briefly speak to the Second, to wit,

"That

"That there are some Professors, "whose Day of Grace will end with "*Cut it down*, with Judgment; when "Christ hath used all the Means for "their Salvation."

This the Apostle sheweth in the *third* Chapter of his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, where he tells us, that the People of the *Jews*, after a *Forty Years Patience*, and Endeavour to do them good by the Means appointed for that Purpose, their End was to be *cut down*, or excluded the Land of Promise, for their final Incredulity, "So we see they could "not enter in because of Unbelief (*s*)." "Wherefore, *saith he*, I was grieved "with that Generation, and said, they "do always err in their Hearts, and "they have not known my Ways: So "I sware in my Wrath, that they "should not enter into my Rest." As if he should say, "I would they should "have entered in, and for that Pur-"pose I brought them out of *Egypt*, "led them thro' the Sea, and taught "them in the Wilderness; but they "did not answer my Work, nor De-"signs in that Matter: Wherefore, "they

(*s*) Heb. iii. 10, 11.

" they ſhall not, I ſware they ſhall not, " *I ſware in my Wrath, they ſhould not* " *enter into my Reſt.*" Here is *Cutting down with Judgment.* So again, *Chapter* the *fourth*, he ſaith, " As I have ſworn " in my Wrath, *if* they ſhall enter into " my Reſt, although the Works were " finiſhed from the Foundation of the " World (*t*)." This Word *if*, is the ſame with *(they ſhall not)* in the Chapter before. And where he ſaith, " Although the Works were finiſhed from " the Foundation of the World." He giveth us to underſtand, that whatever Preparations ſoever are made for the Salvation of Sinners, and of how long continuance ſoever they are, yet the God-tempting, God-provoking, and fruitleſs Profeſſor, is like to go without a Share therein; *Although the Works were finiſhed from the Foundation of the World.*

" I will therefore put you in Re" membrance, though ye once knew " this, how that the Lord having ſaved " the People out of the Land of *Egypt*, " afterwards deſtroyed them that be" lieved not. And the Angels that " kept

(*t*) Heb. iv. 2, 3, 4.

" kept not their first Estate, but left
" their own Habitation, he hath re-
" served in everlasting Chains, under
" Darkness, unto the Judgment of the
" great Day (*u*)." Here is an Instance to purpose, an Instance of Men and Angels. Men saved out of the Land of *Egypt*, and in their Journey toward *Canaan*, the Type of Heaven (cut down) Angels created, and placed in the Heavens in great Estate and Principality, yet both these, because unfruitful to God in their Places, were *cut down*, the Men destroyed by God (for so saith the *Text*), and the Angels reserved in everlasting Chains, under Darkness, *to the Judgment of the great Day.*

Now, in my handling of this Point, I shall discourse of the *Cutting down*, or the Judgment here denounced, as it respecteth the doing of it by God's Hand immediately, and that too, with respect to his *Casting them out of the World.* And *not* as it respecteth an *Act* of the Church, *&c.* And as to this Cutting down of Judgment, it must be concluded; that it *cannot be before the*

(*u*) Jude ver. 5, 6.

the Day of Grace be past with the Fig-tree. But according to the *Observation, There be some Professors whose Day of Grace will end with,* Cut it down, *according to the* Words of the *Text, then* after that, *thou shalt cut it down. After that,* that is, after all my Attempts and Endeavours to make it fruitful, after I have left it, given it over, done with it, and resolved to bestow *no more* Days of Grace, Opportunities of Grace, and Means of Grace upon it; then *after that* thou shalt cut it down.

Besides, the *giving up* of the *Fig-tree,* is *before* the Execution. *Execution* is not always *presently* upon the *Sentence* given; for, *after that,* a convenient Time is thought on, and *then* is *Cutting down:* And so it is here in the *Text.* The Decree that he shall perish, is gathered from its continuing fruitless quite through the *last Year,* from its continuing fruitless *at the End of all Endeavours.* But *Cutting down* is not yet, for that comes with an *after Word: Then after* that *thou shalt cut it down.*

So

So then, that I may orderly proceed with the Obſervation, I muſt lay down theſe two Propoſitions.

Firſt, *That the Day of Grace ends with ſome Men,* before God takes them out of this World. And,

Secondly, The Death, or *Cutting down* of ſuch Men will be dreadful. For this *Cut it down,* when it is underſtood in the largeſt Senſe *(as here indeed it ought)* it ſheweth, not only the Wrath of God againſt a Man's Life in this World, but his Wrath againſt him, Body and Soul. And is as much as to ſay, Cut him off from all the Privileges, and Benefits that come by Grace, both in this World, and that which is to come.

Propoſition I.

But to proceed, "The Day of "Grace ends with ſome Men, before "God taketh them out of this "World." I ſhall give you ſome Inſtances of this, and ſo go on to the laſt *Propoſition.*

Firſt,

First, I shall instance *Cain*; *Cain* was a Professor, a Sacrificer (*x*), a Worshipper of God; yea, the first Worshipper that we read of *after the Fall.* But his Grapes were wild ones; *his Works were evil* (*y*), he did not do what he did, from right Motives. Therefore God disallowed his Work; at this his Countenance falls; wherefore he envies his Brother, quarrels with him, takes his Opportunity, and kills him. Now in *that* Day that he *did this* Act, was the Heavens closed up against him, and that himself did smartingly and fearfully feel, when God made Inquisition for the Blood of *Abel*, "And now "cursed, *said God*, shalt thou be from "the Earth, which hath opened her "Mouth to receive thy Brother's Blood "from thy Hand, and," *&c.* "And "*Cain* said, My Punishment is greater "than I can bear (*z*)." Mine Iniquity is greater than it may be forgiven. "Behold, thou hast driven me "out this Day from the Face of the "Earth, and from thy Face shall I be "hid." Now thou art cursed, saith

I God.

(*x*) Gen. iv. 3. (*y*) 1 John iii, 12. (*z*) Gen. iv. 8, 11, 12, 13, 14.

God. Thou haſt driven me out *this* Day, ſaith *Cain*, and from thy Face ſhall I be hid; I ſhall never more have Hope in thee, Smile from thee, nor expect Mercy at thy Hand. Thus therefore *Cain*'s Day of Grace ended, and the Heavens, with God's own Heart, were ſhut up againſt him; *yet, after this*, he lived long. *Cutting down*, was not come yet: After *this* he lived to marry a Wife, to beget a curſed Brood, to build a City (*a*), (and what elſe I know not) all which could not be quickly done; wherefore *Cain* might live after the Day of Grace was paſt with him, ſeveral *Hundred* Years.

Secondly, I ſhall inſtance *Iſhmael* (*b*): *Iſhmael* was a Profeſſor, was brought up in *Abraham*'s Family, and was circumciſed at *Thirteen Years of Age*, but he was the Son of the *Bond-woman*, he brought not forth good Fruit, he was *a wild Profeſſor*. For all his Religion, he would ſcoff at thoſe that were better than himſelf. Well, upon a Day his brother *Iſaac* was weaned, at which Time his Father made a Feaſt, and rejoiced

(*a*) Gen. iv. 6, 17. (*b*) Ibid. xxii. 23, 26, and xvi. 12.

joiced before the Lord, for that he had given him the promised Son: *at this* Ishmael *mocked* them, their Son, and godly Rejoicing. Then came the Spirit of God upon *Sarah*, and she cried, "Cast him out, cast out this Bond-"woman, and her Son; for the Son "of this Bond-woman shall not be "Heir with my Son, even with "Isaac (*c*)" Now *Paul* to the *Galatians* makes this Casting out to be, not only a Casting out of *Abraham*'s Family, but a Casting out also *from a Lot with the Saints in Heaven* (*d*). Also *Moses* giveth us a notable Proof thereof, in saying, that when *Ishmael* died, *he was gathered to his People* (*e*), his People by his Mother's Side, for he was reckoned from her, the Son of *Hagar*, the Son of the Bond-woman. Now she came of the *Egyptians* (*f*): So that he was gathered when he died, notwithstanding his Profession, to the Place where *Pharaoh* and his Host were gathered to, who were drowned in the *Red-Sea*; these were his People, and he was of them, both by Nature and

(*c*) Gen. xxv. 8, 10, 11. (*d*) Gal. iv. 29, 30, 31.
(*e*) Gen. xxv. 17.

Diſpoſition, by perſecuting as they did. But now, *When did the Day of Grace end with this Man?* Obſerve, and I will ſhew you: *Iſhmael* was *Thirteen Years old*, when he was circumciſed, and then was *Abraham Ninety Years old* and *Nine* (*g*). The *next Year Iſaac* was born. So that *Iſhmael* was *now Fourteen* Years of Age. Now *when* Iſaac *was weaned* (ſuppoſe he ſucked Four Years) by that Account, *the Day of Grace muſt be ended with* Iſhmael, *by that he was* Eighteen *Years old* (*h*). For that Day he mocked, that Day it was ſaid, *Caſt him out*, and of that Caſting out, the Apoſtle makes what I have ſaid. Beware ye young, barren Profeſſors. *Iſhmael* lived an *Hundred* and *Nineteen* Years after this, in great Tranquility and Honour with Men; after this alſo he begat *Twelve* Princes, even after his Day of Grace was paſt.

Thirdly, I ſhall inſtance *Eſau*. *Eſau* alſo was a Profeſſor, he was born unto *Iſaac*, and circumciſed according

(*f*) Gen. xxi. 9. (*g*) Ibid. xvii. 24, 25, 26.
(*h*) Gen. xxv. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

ing to the Custom (*i*): But *Esau* was a *Gamesome Professor*, an Huntsman, *a Man of the Field*; also he was wedded to his Lusts, which he did also venture to keep, *rather than the Birth-right*. Well, upon a Day, when he came from Hunting, and was faint, he sold his Birth-right to *Jacob* his Brother. Now the Birth-right in those Days, had the Promise and Blessing annexed to it. Yea, they were so entailed *in this*, that the one could not go without the other; wherefore the Apostle's Caution is here of Weight: "Take heed, *saith* "*he*, lest there be among you a For-"nicator, or profane Person as *Esau*, "who for one Morsel of Meat sold "his Birth-right; for ye know how "that afterwards, when he would "have inherited the Blessing, he was "rejected; for he found no Place of "Repentance, though he sought it "carefully with Tears (*k*)." Now the ending of *Esau*'s Day of Grace is to be reckoned from his Selling his Birth-right: For there the Apostle

(*i*) Gen. xxv. 27, 28, 29, 30—34. (*k*) Heb. xii. 16, 17.

points it, lest there be among you any, that like *Esau*, sells his Birth-right: For then goes hence the Blessing also.

But *Esau* sold his Birth-right long before his Death. *Twenty* Years after this, *Jacob* was with *Laban*, and when he returned Home, his Brother *Esau* met him (*l*). Farther, after this, when *Jacob* dwelt again some Time with his Father, then *Jacob* and *Esau* buried him (*m*). I suppose he might live above *Forty* Years, yea, for ought I know, above *Fourscore* Years after he had sold his Birth-right. And so consequently he had put himself out of the Grace of God.

Three Things I would further note upon these *Three* Professors.

First, *Cain* an angry Professor, *Ishmael* a mocking one, *Esau* a lustful, gamesome one: *Three Symptoms* of a barren Professor. For he that can be angry, and that can mock, and that can

(*l*) Gen. xxxi. 41. Ibid. xxxii. 6. (*m*) Gen. xxxv. 28, 29.

can indulge his Lusts, cannot bring forth Fruit to God.

Secondly, The Day of Grace ended with these Professors at that Time when they committed some grievous Sin; *Cain*'s when he killed his Brother; *Ishmael*'s when he mocked at *Isaac*, &c. And *Esau* when out of Love to his Lusts, he despised, and sold his Birth-right. Beware barren Professor; "thou mayest do that in "half a quarter of an Hour, from "the Evil of which thou mayest not "be delivered for ever and ever."

Thirdly, Yet these *Three, after their Day of Grace was over*, lived better Lives, as to outward Things, than ever they did before. Cain, *after this*, was Lord of a City (*n*); *Ishmael* was, *after this*, Father of *Twelve* Princes (*o*); and *Esau, after this*, told his Brother, "I have enough, my Bro-"ther, keep that thou hast to thy-"self (*p*)." Ease, and Peace, and a prosperous

(*n*) Gen. iv. 17, 19, 29. (*o*) Ibid. xxiii. 13. (*p*) Ibid. xxxiii. 8 9.

prosperous Life in Outwards, is no Sign of the Favour of God to a barren and fruitless Professor; but rather of his *Wrath*, that thereby he may be capable to treasure up *more* Wrath, against the " Day of Wrath and Re-" velation of the righteous Judgment " of God."

Let thus much serve for the Proof of the *First* Proposition, namely, " That the Day of Grace ends with " some Men, before God takes them " out of this World."

Now then, to shew you by some Signs, how you may know that the Day of Grace is ended, or near to ending with the barren Professor; *And after that thou shalt cut it down.*

First, He that hath stood it out against God, and that hath withstood all those Means for Fruit, that God hath used for the making of him (if it might have been) a fruitful Tree in his Garden, he is in this Danger; and this indeed is the *Sum of the Parable:* The Fig-tree here mentioned,

was

was bleſſed with the Application of Means, had Time allowed it to receive the Nouriſhment: But it outſtood, withſtood, overſtood *all*, all that the Huſbandman did, *all* that the Vinedreſſer did.

Signs of being paſt Grace.

But a little diſtinctly to particularize in *Four* or *Five* Particulars.

Sign I.

Firſt, The Day of Grace is like to be paſt, when a Profeſſor hath withſtood, abuſed, *and worn out God's Patience*, then he is in Danger; this is a Provocation, then God cries, *Cut it down*. There are ſome Men that *ſteal* into a Profeſſion, *no body knows how*; even as this Fig-tree was brought into the Vineyard (*q*), by other Hands than God's: And there they abide lifeleſs, graceleſs, careleſs, *and without any good Conſcience to God at all.* Perhaps they came in for

(*q*) John vi. 26.

for the Loaves, for a Trade, for a Credit, for a Blind; or it may be to ſtifle, and choak the Checks, and grinding Pangs of an awakened, and diſquieted Conſcience. Now having obtained their Purpoſe, "like the "Sinners of Sion (*r*)," they are at Eaſe, and ſecure; ſaying, like *Agag*, "Surely the Bitterneſs of Death is "paſt (*s*);" I am well, ſhall be ſaved, and go to Heaven. Thus in theſe vain Conceits, *they ſpend a Year, two or three*; not remembring that at every Seaſon of Grace, and at every Opportunity of the Goſpel, *the Lord comes ſeeking Fruit. Well*, Sinner, *well, barren Fig-tree*, this is but a coarſe *Beginning*; God comes for Fruit. What have I here, ſaith God, what a *Fig-tree* is this, that hath ſtood this Year in my Vineyard, and brought me forth no Fruit. I will cry unto him, Profeſſor! *Barren Fig-tree*, be fruitful! I look for Fruit, I expect Fruit, I muſt have Fruit, therefore bethink thyſelf. At theſe Words the Profeſſor pauſes; but theſe are but Words, *not Blows*, therefore off goes this

(*r*) Amos vi. 1. (*s*) 1 Sam. xv. 30.

this Consideration from the Heart: When God comes next Year, he finds him still as he was, a *barren*, fruitless *Cumber-ground*. And now again he complains, Here are *Two Years gone*, and *no* Fruit appears: Well, I will defer mine Anger for my Name Sake (*t*). I will defer mine Anger for my Praise, *I will refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off* (as yet). I will yet wait to be gracious. But this helps not, this hath not the least Influence upon the barren Fig-tree,—*Tush*, saith he, here is *no* Threatening: *God is merciful*, he will defer his Anger, he waits to be gracious (*u*): *I am not yet afraid*. O how ungodly Men, that are unawares crept into the Vineyard, "how do they turn the Grace of "God into Lasciviousness (*x*)." Well, he comes the third Year for Fruit, as he did before, but still he finds *but a barren Fig-tree*; *No* Fruit:—Now he cries out again, *O thou Dresser of my Vineyard*, come hither, here's a *Fig-tree* hath stood these *Three*

(*t*) Isaiah xlviii. 9. (*u*) Ibid. xxx. 28. (*x*) Jude 4.

Three Years in my Vineyard, and hath at every Seaſon diſappointed my Expectation, for I have looked for Fruit in vain. *Cut it down*, my Patience is worn out, *I ſhall wait on this Fig-tree no longer.*

2. And now he begins to ſhake the *Fig-tree* with his Threatenings: Fetch out the *Ax*; now the *Ax* is Death (*y*); Death therefore is called for; Death come, ſmite me *this* Fig-tree, and withal the Lord ſhakes this Sinner, and *whirls* him upon a Sick-bed, ſaying, *Take him, Death*, he hath abuſed my Patience and Forbearance, not remembering that it ſhould have led him to Repentance, and to the Fruits thereof. *Death fetch away this Fig-tree to the Fire*, fetch this barren Profeſſor to Hell. At this, Death comes with *grim* looks into the Chamber, yea, and Hell follows with him to the Bed-ſide, and both ſtare this Profeſſor in the Face, yea, begin to lay Hands upon him; one ſmiting him with Pains in his Body, with Head-ach, Heart-ach, Back-ach, Short-neſs

(*y*) Rom. ii. 3, 4.

neſs of Breath, Fainting Qualms, Trembling of Joints, Stopping at the Cheſt, and almoſt all the Symptoms of a Man paſt all Recovery. Now while *Death* is thus tormenting the Body, *Hell* is doing with the Mind and Conſcience, ſtriking them with its Pains, caſting Sparks of Fire in thither, wounding with Sorrows and Fears of everlaſting Damnation, the Spirit of this poor Creature: And now he begins to bethink himſelf, and to cry to God for Mercy; *Lord, ſpare me; Lord, ſpare me.* Nay, ſaith God, you have been a provocation to me, *theſe Three Years.* How many Times have you diſappointed me? How many Seaſons have you ſpent in vain? How many Sermons, and other Mercies did I of my Patience afford you? But *all* to no Purpoſe at all. *Take him, Death.* O, good Lord, ſaith the Sinner, ſpare me but *this once.* Raiſe me but *this once.* Indeed I have been a barren Profeſſor, and have ſtood to no Purpoſe at all in thy Vineyard: But ſpare! O ſpare, *this one Time,* I beſeech thee, and I will be better.— *Away, away,* you will not. I have

tried you *these three Years* already, you are nought; if I ſhould recover you again, you would be as bad as you was before (and all this Talk is while Death ſtands by.) The Sinner cries again, Good Lord, try me *this once*, let me get up again *this once*, and ſee if I do not mend. But will you promiſe me to mend? Yes, indeed, Lord, and vow it too; I will never be ſo bad again, *I will be better.*— Well, ſaith God, *Death*, let this Profeſſor alone *for this Time.* I will try him a while longer, he hath promiſed, he hath *vowed* that he will amend his Ways. It may be he will mind to keep his Promiſes. *Vows* are ſolemn Things; it may be he may *fear to break his Vows:* Ariſe from off thy Bed; and *now God lays down his Ax.* At this the poor Creature is very thankful, praiſes God, and fawns upon him, ſhews as if he did it heartily, and calls to others to thank him too. He therefore riſeth, as one would think, to be a New Creature indeed. But by that he hath put on his Cloaths, is come down from his Bed, and ventured into the Yard, or Shop, and

and there ſees how all Things are gone to *Sixes* and *Sevens*, he begins to have *ſecond* Thoughts: And ſays to his Folks, What have you all been doing? How are all Things out of Order? I am I cannot tell what behind-hand; one may ſee if a Man be but a little a-to-ſide, you have neither Wiſdom, nor Prudence to order Things: And now, inſtead of ſeeking to ſpend the reſt of his Time to God, *he doubleth his Diligence after this World.* Alas! all muſt not be loſt, *we muſt have a provident Care:* And thus quite forgetting the Sorrows of Death, the Pains of Hell, the Promiſes and Vows which he made to God to be better:— "Becauſe Judgment was not *(now)* "ſpeedily executed, therefore the "Heart of this poor Creature is fully "ſet in him to do evil."

Theſe Things proving ineffectual, *God takes hold of his* Ax *again*, ſends Death to a Wife, to a Child, to his Cattle, "your young Men have I "ſlain, and taken away your "Horſes (z);" I will blaſt him, croſs him,

(z) Amos iv. 9, 10.

him, disappoint him, and cast him down, and will set myself against him, *in all that he putteth his Hand unto.* At this the poor *Barren Professor* cries out again, Lord, I have sinned, spare me once more I beseech thee. O take not away the *Desire of mine Eyes*, spare my Children, bless me in my Labours, and I will mend, and be better. No; saith God, you lied to me last Time, I will trust you, in this, no longer, and with all he tumbleth the Wife, the Child, the Estate into a Grave:- And then returns to his Place, till this Professor more unfeignedly acknowledge his Offence (*a*).

At this the poor Creature is afflicted and distressed, rents his Cloaths (*b*), and begins to call the breaking his Promise and Vows to mind, he mourns and prays, and like *Ahab*, *a while walks softly*, at the Remembrance of the Justness of the Hand of God upon him. And now he renews his Promises, Lord, try me *this one Time more*, take off thy Hand and see, *they go far as never turn.* Well, God spareth him

(*a*) Hos. v. 14, 15. (*b*) 1 Kings xxi. 27.

him again, sets down his *Ax* again. "Many Times he did deliver them, "but they provoked him with their "Counsels, and were brought low "for their Iniquities (*c*)." Now they seem to be thankful again, and are as if they were resolved to be Godly indeed. Now they read, they pray, they go to Meetings, and seem to be serious a pretty while, but at last they forget. Their Lusts prick them, suitable Temptations present themselves:—Wherefore they turn to their own crooked Ways again. "When he slew "them, then they sought him, and "returned early after God, neverthe-"less they did flatter him with their "Mouth, and lied unto him with "their Tongue (*d*)."

4. Yet again, The Lord will not leave this Professor, but will take up his *Ax* again, and will put him under a more heart-searching Ministry, a Ministry that shall search him, and turn him over and over, a Ministry that shall meet with him, and as *Elijah* met with *Ahab*, in all his Acts of Wick-

(*c*) Psal. cvi. 43. (*d*) Psal. lxxviii. 34, 36.

ednefs; and " now the Ax is laid to " the Roots of the Trees (*e*)." Befides, this Miniftry doth not only fearch the Heart, but prefenteth the Sinner with the *Golden* Rays of the glorious Gofpel. *Now is Chrift Jefus fet forth evidently*; now is Grace difplayed fweetly; now, now are the Promifes broken like *Boxes* of *Ointment*, to the perfuming of the whole Room. *But alas, there is yet no Fruit on this Fig-tree.* While his Heart is fearching, he wrangles; while the glorious Grace of the Gofpel is unveiling, this Profeffor wags and is wanton, gathers up fome *Scraps* thereof, " Taftes the good " Word of God, and the Powers of " the World to come." Drinketh in this Rain that comes often upon him (*f*), " But bringeth not forth Fruit meet " for him, whofe Gofpel it is; takes " no Heed to walk in the Law of the " Lord God of *Ifrael*, with all his " Heart (*g*);" but counteth that the Gofpel confifteth in talk and fhew, and that our Obedience thereto, is a Matter of *Speculation*; that good *Works* lie

(*e*) Matt. iii. 10. (*f*) Heb. vi. 3, 7—8. (*g*) 2 Kings x. 31.

lie in good *Words*, and if they can finely talk, they think they *bravely* pleaſe God. They think the Kingdom of God conſiſteth only in Word, not in Power: And thus proveth ineffectual this *Fourth* Means alſo.

5. Well, Now the *Ax* begins to be heaved higher, for now indeed God is ready to ſmite the Sinner, yet before he will ſtrike the Stroke, he will try one Way more at the laſt, and if that miſſeth, *down goes the Fig-tree.* Now this laſt Way is *to tug, and ſtrive with this Profeſſor by his Spirit.* Wherefore the Spirit of the Lord is now come to him: But *not always to ſtrive with Man**, yet a while he will ſtrive with him, he will awaken, he will convince, he will call to Remembrance former Sins, former Judgments, the Breach of former Vows and Promiſes, the Miſpending of former Days; he will alſo preſent perſuaſive Arguments, encouraging Promiſes, dreadful Judgments, the Shortneſs of Time to repent in, and that there is Hope if he come. Further, he will ſhew him the Certainty of Death, and of

* Gen. iv. 3.

of the Judgment to come; yea, he will pull and ſtrive with this Sinner. But, behold, the Miſchief now lies here, here is tugging and ſtriving on both Sides. The Spirit convinces, the Man turns a deaf Ear to God; the *Spirit* ſaith, Receive my Inſtruction and live; but the *Man* pulls away his Shoulder; the *Spirit* ſhews him whither he is going, but the Man cloſeth his Eyes againſt it; the *Spirit* offereth Violence, the *Man* ſtrives and reſiſts, "They have done Deſpite unto "the Spirit of Grace (*h*)." The Spirit *parlieth* a *Second* Time, and urgeth Reaſons of a new Nature: But the Spirit anſwereth, "No; I have loved "Strangers, and after them I will "go (*i*)." At this God's Fury ariſeth, now he comes out of his Holy Place, and is terrible: Now he "ſwareth in "his Wrath, they ſhall never enter "into his Reſt." I exerciſed towards you my Patience, yet you have not turned to me, ſaith the Lord. I ſmote you in your Perſon, in your Relations, in your Eſtate, yet you have not returned

(*h*) Heb. x. 29. (*i*) Amos iv. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.

turned unto me, ſaith the Lord. "In thy Filthineſs is Lewdneſs: Be-
"cauſe I have purged thee, and thou
"waſt not purged, thou ſhalt not be
"purged from thy Filthineſs any
"more, till I cauſe my Fury to reſt
"upon thee (*k*)." *Cut it down, Why doth it cumber the Ground?*

A Second *Sign.*

Another *Sign* that ſuch a Profeſſor is almoſt (if not quite) paſt Grace, is *when God hath given him over, or lets him alone*, and ſuffers him to do any Thing, and that without Controul, helpeth him not in Works of Holineſs, or in Straights and Difficulties, "Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him
"alone: Wo be to them when I de-
"part from them (*l*). I will laugh at
"their Calamities, and mock when
"their Fear cometh (*m*)."

Barren

(*k*) Ezek. xxiv. 13. (*l*) Hoſ. iv. 17. (*m*) Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

Barren Fig-tree, thou haſt heretofore been digged about, and dunged, God's Mattock hath heretofore been at thy Roots, Goſpel-dung hath heretofore been applied to thee; thou haſt heretofore been ſtrove with, convinced, awakened, made to taſte and ſee, and cry, *O the Bleſſedneſs!* Thou haſt heretofore been met with under the Word, thy Heart hath melted, thy Spirit hath fallen, thy Soul hath trembled, and thou haſt felt ſomething of the Power of the Goſpel. But thou haſt ſinned, thou haſt provoked the Eye of his Glory, thy Iniquity is found to be hateful, and now perhaps God hath left thee, given thee up, *and lets thee alone.*

Heretofore thou waſt tender, thy Conſcience ſtartled at the Temptation to Wickedneſs, for thou wert taken off from "the Pollutions of "the World, through the Knowledge "of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus "Chriſt (*n*);" but that very *Vomit* that once thou wert turned from, now

(*n*) 2 Pet. ii. 23, 22, 22.

now thou happeſt up, with the *Dog* in the *Proverb*, again, and that very *Mire*, that once thou ſeemedſt to be waſhed from, *in that very Mire, thou now art tumbling afreſh.* But to particularize, there are *Three* Signs of a Man's being given over of God.

1. When he is let alone in Sinning, *when the Reins of his Luſts are looſed*, and he given up to them. " And even as they did not like to " retain God in their Knowledge, God " gave them over to a reprobate " Mind, to do thoſe Things which " are not convenient; being filled " with all Unrighteouſneſs." Seeſt thou a Man that heretofore had the Knowledge of God, and that had ſome Awe of his Majeſty upon him; I ſay, ſeeſt thou ſuch an one " Sporting " himſelf in his own Deceivings (*o*)," turning the Grace of our God into Laſciviouſneſs, and walking after his own ungodly Luſts; his Judgment, now of a long Time, lingereth not, " and his Damnation ſlum-
" bereth

(*o*) Rom. i. 28, 29, 30, 31.

"bereth not (*p*)." Doſt thou hear, barren Profeſſor, it is aſtoniſhing to ſee, how thoſe that once ſeemed "Sons of the Morning (*q*)," and were making Preparations for Eternal Life, now at laſt, for the Rottenneſs of their Hearts, by the juſt Judgment of God, to be permitted, being paſt feeling, to give themſelves over unto Laſciviouſneſs, *to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs*. A great Number of ſuch were in the *firſt* Goſpel-days; againſt whom *Peter*, and *Jude*, and *John*, pronounceth the heavy Judgment of God. "*Peter* and *Jude* couple them "with the fallen Angels (*r*);" and *John* forbids that Prayer be made for them, becauſe that is happened to them, that happened to the Angels that fell. "Who, for forſaking their "firſt State, and for leaving their own "Habitation, are reſerved in Chains, "under everlaſting Darkneſs, unto "the Judgment of the great Day." *Barren Fig-tree*, Doſt thou hear?

Firſt,

(*p*) 2 Pet. ii. 13, (*q*) Jude 4, 18, (*r*) 2 Pet. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

First, These are beyond all Mercy.

Secondly, These are beyond all Promises.

Thirdly, These are beyond all Hopes of Repentance.

Fourthly, These have no Intercessor, nor any more Share in a Sacrifice for Sin.

Fifthly, For these remains nothing, but a fearful Looking for of Judgment.

Sixthly, Wherefore these are true Fugitives and Vagabonds, that being left of God, of Christ, of Grace, of the Promise, and being beyond all Hope, wander and straggle to and fro, even as the Devil, their Associate, until the Time shall come to die, or until they descend in Battle, and perish.

2. Wherefore they are let alone in hearing. If these at any Time come under the Word, there is for them

no God, *no* Saviour of the Means of Grace, *no* Stirrings of Heart, *no* Pity for themselves, *no* Love to their own Salvation. Let them look on this Hand, or that, there they see such Effects of the Word in others, as produceth Signs of Repentance, and Love to God and his Christ, *These Men only have their Backs bowed down alway.* These Men only "have the "Spirit of Slumber, Eyes that they "should not see, and Ears that they "should not hear to this very Day (*s*)." Wherefore, "as they go to the Place "of the Holy, so they come from the "the Place of the Holy; and soon "are forgotten in the Places where "they so did (*t*)." Only they reap this Damage, "They treasure up "Wrath against the Day of Wrath, "and Revelation of the righteous "Judgment of God (*u*)." Look to it, *barren Professor.*

3. If he be visited after the common Way of Mankind, either with Sickness,

(*s*) Romans xi. 8, 9. 10. (*t*) Eccles. viii. 10. (*u*) Rom. ii. 3, 4, 5.

Sickness, Distress, or any Kind of Calamity, still no God appeareth, no sanctifying Hand of God, no special Mercy is mixed with the Affliction. But he falls sick, and grows well, *like the Beast*; or is under Distress, as *Saul*, who, when he was engaged by the *Philistines*, was forsaken and left of God. "And the *Philistines* gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in *Shunem*; and *Saul* gathered all *Israel* together, and they pitched in *Gilboa*: And when *Saul* saw the Host of the *Philistines*, he was afraid, and his Heart greatly trembled. And when *Saul* enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him no more, neither by Dreams, nor by *Urim*, nor by the Prophets (*x*)." The Lord answered him *no* more, he had done with him, cast him off, and rejected him, and left him to stand and fall with his Sins by himself. But of this more in the *Conclusion*, therefore I here forbear.

4. These Men may go whither they

(*x*) 1 Sam. xxviii. 4, 5, 6.

will, do what they will, they may range from Opinion to Opinion, from Notion to Notion, from Sect to Sect, but are stedfast no where, they are left to their own Uncertainties: They have no Grace to establish their Hearts; and though some of them have boasted themselves of this Liberty, yet *Jude* calls them, "wandering Stars, "to whom is reserved the Blackness "of Darkness for ever (*y*)." They are left, as I told you before, to be Fugitives and Vagabonds in the Earth, to wander every where, but to abide no where, until they shall descend "to their own Place, *with* Cain *and* "Judas (*z*)," Men of the same Fate with themselves.

A Third *Sign.*

Thirdly, Another Sign, that such a Professor is quite past Grace, is, when his Heart is grown so hard, so stony and impenetrable, that nothing will pierce it. *Barren Fig-tree, Dost thou consider?*

(*y*) Jude 13. (*z*) Acts i. 5.

consider? A hard and impenitent Heart, is the Curse of God (*a*). A Heart that cannot repent, is instead of all Plagues at once: And hence it is, that God said of *Pharoah*, when he spake of delivering him up in the greatness of his Anger, "I will, at "this Time, *saith he*, send all my "Plagues upon thy Heart (*b*)."

To some Men that have grievously sinned under a Profession of the Gospel, God giveth this *Token* of his Displeasure; they are denied the Power of Repentance, their Heart is bound, they cannot repent: It is impossible that they should ever repent, should they live a *Thousand* Years; "It is im-"possible for those *Fall-aways* to be "renewed again unto Repentance, "seeing they crucify to themselves "the Son of God afresh, and put him "to open Shame (*c*)." Now to have the Heart so hardened, *so judicially hardened*, this is as a bar put in by the Lord God, against the Salvation of

(*a*) Rom. ii. 5. (*b*) Exod. ix. 14. (*c*) Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.

this Sinner. This was the Burden of *Spira*'s Complaint, " I cannot do it: " O now I cannot do it."

This Man ſees what he hath done, what ſhould help him, and what will become of him, yet he cannot repent (*d*); he pulled away his Shoulder before, he ſtopped his Ears before, he ſhut up his Eyes before, *and in that very Poſture God left him*, and ſo he ſtands to this very Day. I have had a Fancy, that *Lot*'s Wife, when ſhe turned into a Pillar of Salt, ſtood yet looking over her Shoulder, or elſe with her Face towards *Sodom*; as the Judgment caught her, ſo it bound her, and left her a Monument of God's Anger to after Generations.

We read of ſome that are *ſeared with an hot Iron*, and that are *paſt Feeling*; for ſo ſeared Perſons in ſeared Parts are. Their Conſcience is ſeared (*e*). The Conſcience is the Thing that muſt be touched with Feeling, Fear

(*d*) Zech. vii. 12, 13, 14. (*e*) 1 Tit. iv. 3.

Fear and *Remorse*, if any good be done with the Sinner. How then can any good be done to those whose Conscience is " worse than that, that is " fast asleep in Sin (*f*)." For that Conscience that is fast asleep, may be awakened and saved: but that Conscience *that is seared*, dried, as it were, into a Cinder, can never have Sense, Feeling, or the least Regret in the World. *Barren Fig-tree, hearken, judicial hardening is dreadful.* There is a Difference betwixt that Hardness of Heart, that is incident to all Men, and that which comes upon some as a Signal, or special Judgment of God: And although all Kind of Hardness of Heart, in some Sense, may be called a Judgment, yet to be hardened with this *Second* Kind, is a Judgment peculiar only to them that perish: An Hardness that is sent as a Punishment, *for the Abuse of Light received, for a Reward of Apostacy.*

This *Judicial* Hardness is discovered from that which is incident to all Men, in these Particulars:

1. It

(*f*) Eph. iv. 19.

1. It is an Hardneſs that comes after ſome great Light received, *because of ſome great Sin committed againſt that Light, and the Grace that gave it.* Such Hardneſs as *Pharoah* had, after the Lord had wrought wondrouſly before him: Such Hardneſs as the *Gentiles* had, a Hardneſs which darkened the Heart, a Hardneſs which made their Minds reprobate. *This* Hardneſs is alſo the ſame with that the *Hebrews* are cautioned to beware of [*i*]; an Hardneſs that is cauſed by Unbelief, and a Departing from the Living God; an Hardneſs through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin: Such as that in the Provocation, of whom God ſware that they ſhould not enter into his *Reſt*. 'Twas this Kind of Hardneſs alſo that both *Cain*, and *Iſhmael*, and *Eſau*, were hardened with, after they had committed *their great Tranſgreſſions.*

2. It is the *greateſt* Kind of *Hardneſs*, and hence they are ſaid to be *Harder than a Rock* [*k*], or than an *Adamant*,

[*i*] Heb. iii. 7 to 13. [*k*] Jer. v. 3.

Adamant, that is, *harder than Flint*. So hard that nothing can enter.

3. It is an Hardness [*l*] given in much Anger, and that to bind the Soul up in an Impossibility of Repentance [*m*].

4. It is an Hardness therefore which is incurable, of which a Man must die and be damned. *Barren Professor, hearken to this.*

A Fourth *Sign.*

Fourthly, Another *Sign* that such a Professor is quite past Grace, is when he fortifies his hard Heart against the *Tenour* of God's Word. This is called *hardening themselves against God, and turning of the Spirit against him* [*n*]. As thus, when after a Profession of Faith in the Lord Jesus, and of the Doctrine that is according to Godliness, they shall embolden themselves

[*l*] Rom. ii. 5. [*m*] Heb. vi. 6. [*n*] Job ix. 4, 5, 12, 13.

ſelves in Courſes of Sin, *by promiſing themſelves that they ſhall have Life and Salvation notwithſtanding. Barren Profeſſor,* hearken to this. This Man is called, *A Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood, or a poiſonful Herb* [o], ſuch an one as is abominated of God; yea the Abhorred of his Soul. For this Man ſaith, *I ſhall have Peace, though I walk in the Imagination, or Stubbornneſs of my Heart, to add Drunkenneſs to Thirſt* [p]; an Opinion flat againſt the whole Word of God, yea againſt the very Nature of God himſelf. Wherefore he adds that, *Then the Anger of the Lord, and his Jealouſy ſhall ſmoak againſt that Man, and all the Curſes that are written in God's Book ſhall lie upon him, and God ſhall blot out his Name from under Heaven* [q].

Yea, that Man ſhall not fail to be effectually deſtroyed, ſaith the *Text, The Lord ſhall ſeparate that Man unto Evil, out of all the Tribes of* Iſrael, *according*

[o] Deut. xxix. 18. [p] Ibid, xxix. 19. [q] Ibid, v. 20.

according to all the Curses of the Covenant [r].

He shall separate him unto Evil, he shall give him up, he shall leave him to his Heart, he shall separate him to that, or those that will assuredly be too hard for him.

Now this Judgment is much effected, when God hath given a Man up unto *Satan*, and hath given *Satan* Leave, *without Fail*, to compleat his Destruction. I say, *When God hath given Satan Leave effectually to compleat his Destruction:* For all that are delivered up unto Satan, have not, nor do not come to this End. But *that* is the Man, whom God shall *separate* to Evil, and shall *leave* in the Hands of Satan, to *compleat*, without Fail, his Destruction.

Thus he served *Ahab*, a Man *that sold himself to work Wickedness in the Sight of the Lord* [s]. *And the Lord said, Who shall persuade* Ahab, *that he may go*

[r] Deut. xxix. 21. [s] 1 Kings xxi. 25.

go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this Manner, and another said on that Manner: And there came forth a Spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and be a lying Spirit in the Mouth of all his Prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also, go forth, and do so [t]. Thou shalt persuade him, *and prevail*; do thy Will, I leave him in thy Hand, *Go forth, and do so.*

Wherefore in these Judgments, the Lord doth much concern himself for the Management thereof, because of the Provocation, wherewith they have provoked him. This is the Man, *whose Ruin God contriveth, and bringeth to pass by his own Contrivance. I will chuse their Delusions for them. I will bring their Fears upon them* [u]. I will leave them to their own Devices, or the Wickednesses that their Hearts are contriving of. I, even I, will cause them to be accepted of, and delightful

[t] 1 Kings xxii. 20, 21, 22. [u] Isa. lxvi. 4.

delightful to them. But who are they that must thus be feared? Why, those among Professors, that have chosen *their own Ways, those whose Soul delighteth in their Abominations.*

Because they received not the Love of the Truth that they might be saved: for for this Cause God shall send them strong Delusions, that they should believe a Lye, that they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had Pleasure in Unrighteousness.

God shall send them; It is a great Word; Yea, *God shall send them strong Delusions*; Delusions that shall do, that shall make them believe a Lye. Why so? *That they all might be damned, every one of them that believe not the Truth; but had Pleasure in Unrighteousness* [x].

There is nothing more provoking to the Lord, than for a Man to promise, when God threateneth; for a

[x] 2 Thes. ii. 10, 5, 11, 12.

Man to be light of Conceit, that he will be ſafe; and yet to be more wicked than in former Days: This Man's Soul abhorreth the Truth of God, no Marvel therefore if God's Soul abhorreth him: He hath invented a Way contrary to God, to bring about his own Salvation, no Marvel, therefore, if God invent a Way to bring about this Man's Damnation: And ſeeing that theſe Rebels are at this Point, We ſhall have Peace; God will ſee whoſe Word ſhall [*a*] ſtand, his or theirs.

A Fifth *Sign.*

Fifthly, Another *Sign* of a Man's being paſt Grace, is, When he ſhall at *this*, ſcoff, and inwardly *grin*, and fret againſt the Lord, ſecretly purpoſing to continue his Courſe, and put all to the Venture, deſpiſing the Meſſengers of the Lord, *He that deſpiſed* Moſes's *Law, died without Mercy, of how much ſorer Puniſhment, ſuppoſe*

[*a*] Jer. xliv. 26, 27, 28.

ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under Foot the Son of God, &c. [*b*].

Wherefore, againſt theſe Deſpiſers *God hath ſet himſelf,* and foretold, that they *ſhall* not believe but periſh. *Behold ye Deſpiſers, and wonder, and periſh, for I work a Work in your Days, which ye ſhall in no Wiſe believe, though a Man declare it unto you* [*c*].

After that thou ſhalt cut it down.

Thus far we have treated of the *Barren Fig-Tree,* or fruitleſs Profeſſor, with ſome *Signs* to know him by; whereto is added alſo ſome *Signs* of one who neither will or can, by any Means, be fruitful; *but they muſt miſerably periſh.* Now being come to the Time of Execution, I ſhall ſpeak a Word to that alſo, *After that thou ſhalt cut it down.* Chriſt at laſt turns the *Barren Fig-Tree* over to the

[*b*] Heb. x. 28. [*c*] Acts xiii. 41.

Juſtice of God, ſhakes his Hands of him, *And gives him up to the Fire for his Unprofitableneſs.*

Thou ſhalt cut it down.

Two Things are here to be conſidered.

1. The Executioner, *Thou* the Great, the Dreadful, the Eternal God. Theſe Words therefore, as I have already ſaid, ſignify that Chriſt the Mediator, through whom alone Salvation comes, and by whom alone Execution hath been deferred, *Now giveth up the Soul*, forbears to ſpeak one *Syllable* more for him, or to do the leaſt Act of Grace further, to try for his Recovery; but delivereth him up to that fearful Diſpenſation, *To fall into the Hand of the living God* [*d*].

2. The *Second* to be conſidered, is, *The Inſtrument by which the Execution is done*, and that is *Death*, compared here to an *Ax*: and for as much as the Tree is not fellen at one Blow, therefore

[*d*] Heb. x. 31.

therefore the Strokes are here continued, till all the Blows be ſtruck at it, that are requiſite for its *Felling*; For now *Cutting* Time, and *Cutting* Work is come, *Cutting* muſt be his Portion, till it be cut down. *After that thou ſhalt it down.* Death, I ſay, is the *Ax*, which God often uſeth, therewith to take the *Barren Fig-tree* out of the Vineyard, out of a Profeſſion, *and alſo out of the World at once.* But this *Ax* is now new-ground, it cometh well-edged to the Roots of this *Barren Fig-tree.* It hath been whetted by Sin, by the Law, and by a *formal* Profeſſion [*e*], and therefore muſt, and will make deep Gaſhes, not only in the natural Life, but in the Heart, and Conſcience alſo of this Profeſſor. *The Wages of Sin is Death, the Sting of Death is Sin* [*f*]. Wherefore Death comes not to this Man as he doth to Saints, *muzzled* or without his Sting, but with open Mouth, in all his Strength; yea, he ſends *his Firſt-born*, which is

[*e*] Rom. v. [*f*] 1 Cor. xv.

Guilt to devour his Strength, *and to bring him to the King of Terrors.* [g].

But to give you, in a few *Particulars*, the Manner of this Man's dying.

1. Now he hath his fruitless *Fruits* beleagure him round his Bed, together with all the *Bands* and *Legions* of his other Wickedness. *His own Iniquities shall take the Wicked himself, and he shall be holden in the Cords of his Sins*, Prov. v. 22.

2. Now some terrible Discovery of God is made out unto him, to the perplexing and terrifying of his guilty Conscience; *God shall cast upon him, and not spare, and he shall be afraid of that which is high* [h].

3. The dark Entry he is to go through will be a sore Amazement to him; *For Fear shall be in the Way* [i]; yea Terrors shall take hold on him, when he shall see the *yawning* Jaws

[g] Job xviii. 13, 14. [h] Job xxvii. 22. [i] Eccl. xii. 5.

Jaws of Death to gape upon him, and the Doors of the Shadow of Death open [*k*], to give him Paſſage out of the World. Now who will meet me in this dark Entry, how ſhall I paſs through this long Entry into another World.

4. For the Reaſon of Guilt, and a ſhaken Conſcience, *His Life will hang in continual Doubt before him, and he ſhall be afraid Day and Night* [*l*], and ſhall have no Aſſurance of his Life.

5. Now alſo *Want* will come up againſt him, he will come up *like an armed Man* [*m*]. This is a terrible Army to him that is Graceleſs in Heart, and Fruitleſs in Life. This *Want* will continually cry in thine Ears, here is a new Birth wanting, a new Heart, and a new Spirit wanting, here is Love and Repentance wanting; here is the Fear of God wanting: and a good Converſation wanting; *Thou art weighed in the Ballance, and art found wanting* [*n*].

6. Together

[*k* Job xxxviii. 17. [*l*] Deut. xxviii. 66, 67. [*m*] Prov. xxiv. *ult.* [*n*] Dan. v. 27.

6. Together with these, standeth by *the Companions of Death*; Death and Hell, Death and Devils, Death and endless Torment in the everlasting Flames of devouring Fire. *When God shall come up unto the People, he will invade them with his Troops* [o].

But how will this Man die? Can *now* his Heart endure, or *can his Hands be strong* [p].

1. God and Christ, and Pity *have left him:* Sin against Light, against Mercy, and the Long-suffering of God, *Is come up against him*; his Hope and Confidence *now lie a dying by him*, and his Conscience *totters and shakes* continually within him.

2. Death is at his Work, *Cutting of him down*, hewing both Bark and Heart, both Body and Soul asunder; The Man groans, but Death hears him not: He looks ghastly, carefully, dejectedly;

[o] Hab. iii. 16. [p] Ezek. xxii. 14.

dejectedly; he ſighs, he ſweats, he trembles, but Death matters nothing.

3. Fearful *Cogitations* haunt him, Miſgivings, direful Apprehenſions of God terrify him. Now he hath Time to think what the Loſs of Heaven will be, and what the Torments of Hell will be; now he looks no Way, but he is frighted.

4. Now would he live, but may not; he would live, though it were but the Life of a Bed-ridden Man, but muſt not. He that cuts him down, ſways him, as the Feller of Wood *ſways the Tottering Tree*; now this Way, then that, at laſt a Root breaks; an Heart-ſtring, an Eye-ſtring ſnaps aſunder.

5. And now, could the Soul be *annihilated*, or brought to nothing, for how happy would it count itſelf; but it ſees that may not be. Wherefore it is put to a wonderful Strait: ſtay in the Body it may not, go out of the Body it dares not. *Life* is going, the Blood ſettles in the Fleſh, and the

Lungs

Lungs being now no more able to draw Breath through the Noſtrils, at laſt out goes the weary trembling Soul, who is immediately ſeized by Devils, who lay lurking in every Hole in the Chamber for that very Purpoſe: His Friends take Care of the Body, wrap it up in the Sheet or Coffin, the Soul is out of their Thought and Reach, going down to the Chamber of Death.

I had thought to have enlarged, but I forbear: God, who teaches Man to profit, bleſs this brief and plain Diſcourſe to thy Soul, who yet ſtandeſt a Profeſſor in the Land of the Living, among the Trees of his Garden. *Amen.*

FINIS.

7 NO 61